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This series of Handbooks is intended to set forth in a readable form the results of the scientific study of religion and ethics. The various authors do not undertake to embody in any detail the processes which lie back of their conclusions. Such technical treatment is more appropriate for works of a strictly scientific character than for those intended not only to be used as textbooks and collateral reading in colleges and theological seminaries, but also to be of help to general readers. The volumes all seek to conserve the values of past religious experience. While each author is free to present his own conclusions, the entire series has the common characteristic of historical method. The editors have not prescribed any rigorous uniformity of treatment, but believe that the individuality of treatment will serve to stimulate thought and discussion. It is hoped that the series will help to show that the method of experiment and criticism contributes to stronger religious faith and moral idealism.
—THE EDITORS.

PREACHING ON CHURCH AND COMMUNITY OCCASIONS

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PREACHING ON CHURCH AND COMMUNITY OCCASIONS

By OZORA S. DAVIS

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INTRODUCTION

Sermons may be divided into many classes. One of the most patent divisions gives two groups: those which are preached in the regular course of presenting the gospel as a message incorporated into an order of public worship; and those which are primarily determined by the occasion on which they are preached. The discourse which is thus largely influenced by the time and circumstance under which it is delivered is known as the "occasional sermon." As society becomes more highly organized and complex, the demand for this kind of sermon will doubtless increase.

Every public address is profoundly and subtly affected by the occasion on which it is delivered. Undoubtedly the preacher is more deeply influenced by this essential connection between sermon and occasion than he knows. It enters into his thought and determines his expression all the time, quite unconsciously, but none the less potently. The vital preacher sees in imagination, not only his audience, but, if he is familiar with his congregation, the individual members of it as well. Even the surroundings in which he is preaching influence his thought and its expression. Especially if there is a dominant idea or temper in the day and the occasion, this largely determines the subject matter and the form of the sermon.

Manifestly, there are certain days, events, and circumstances in church and community life when the influence of the occasion becomes so strong that it essentially

influences and even controls the materials to be used in the sermon, the form in which they will be arranged, and the way in which the discourse is delivered. The preacher must be sensitive and responsive to this.

The rapid increase in the number of church and community anniversaries, demanding appropriate and forceful sermons, has come to present a serious problem to the thoughtful preacher. How are the recurrent occasions of religion, civics, and philanthropy ever to be so adjusted that the regular "work of preaching" the gospel can also be carried on efficiently? This is no merely theoretical problem; it engages the preacher at every point of his homiletical work. He desires to cultivate his own Christian tradition, to observe the great days of the Christian year, to be patriotic and loyal in all human relations and community matters. On the other hand, he has a Christian message to give in the regular services of worship conducted for the community by the church. These two interests must be balanced. The "regular" sermons must not be slighted; the "occasional" sermons must not be neglected. Every preacher must plan his ministry of preaching as seems best to him after a careful balance of these sometimes conflicting claims.

The real worth of the occasional sermon is determined by the way in which its timeless message is fitted into the time when it is spoken. Therefore unusual skill is required of the preacher on an especial day. He must do something more than glorify the occasion; he must speak to a deeper mood than the one that is called out for the moment by the event. He has a truth which he must "speak home to the heart" of the occasion; and so he must be sensitive

on the one hand to his eternal message and on the other to the appropriateness of his method of presentation in view of the event. To keep one's balance in this delicate situation involves insight and workmanship of a rare sort in making and delivering a sermon. It is, however, one of the most attractive styles of preaching and one which every preacher must master, since the annual occasions to which he must fit his message are so many.

The following chapters contain brief general suggestions concerning the particular type of sermon called for by various occasions arising in the course of church and community life. Then follow specific suggestions of texts, subjects, and "seed thoughts," which are not meant to be prepared "sermon outlines," but only quickening ideas which will give a healthy start to the preacher's mind as he faces the practical problem of adapting his message to a particular occasion in the passing year. It is the farthest possible remove from the writer's intention to furnish the least substitute for a preacher's independent and vigorous thinking. All minds, however, are eager for a hint, a suggestion, a germinant idea, which will start one on the fruitful journey of intellectual exploration and open alluring vistas into new areas of reflection. It is the purpose of this book to provide such vitalizing projects.

The hint which suggests a sermon may be apparently vague and remote. One of the best examples of this is the familiar incident from the life of Thomas Chalmers. He was riding beside the driver of a coach, when he was amazed to see the man holding the reins suddenly and apparently without cause apply the lash to one of the horses. When the animal had recovered from the excite-

ment, Chalmers asked the driver why he had done this seemingly unnecessary and cruel act. The driver explained that for a few days past this particular horse had shied at this point on the road, and therefore he had given the animal something else to engage his attention at this precise moment. The incident set the mind of Chalmers running on a particular line of reasoning. The result was the famous sermon on "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection." It is hoped that the following hints and suggestions may be found equally profitable in the practical work of preaching.

In arranging the material in the following pages, we have kept in general the accepted course of the Christian Year, fitting into it those other occasions which are not ecclesiastically recognized but are widely observed in the non-liturgical churches. This section begins with Advent and closes with All Saints' Day; it includes chapters i–xxii. The chapters following this deal with occasions which are quite flexible as to fixed dates. They occur, however, with sufficient regularity in the course of preaching so that they must be included in any comprehensive study of a preacher's work. The warrant for them is that of common observance rather than ecclesiastical sanction.

Among the collections of sermons for church and community occasions the following may be noted:

Holy-Days and Holidays, compiled by Edward M. Deems (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1906). This is a volume of 768 pages. It contains a vast amount of material: sermons in whole or part; texts and subjects; illustrations; quotations. It is an extensive collection of matter germane to occasional preaching, but it is difficult

to obtain and could probably be secured only from libraries.

Sermons for Special Days, by Frederick D. Kershner, professor of Christian doctrine in Drake University (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1922). This is a collection of eighteen sermons on the more generally observed occasions. Three are entitled "Passion Week Studies."

Special Sermons for Special Occasions, edited by E. W. Thornton (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Co., 1921). Twenty-two sermons by contemporary preachers make up this volume. The authors are all members of the "Christian" denomination. The prevailing note is conservative. The range is wide, and the sermons themselves are excellent in quality.

Sermons for Days We Observe, by Frederick F. Shannon (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1922). This volume contains eleven sermons by the well-known pastor of Central Church, Chicago. They are of uniformly fine quality and are commended to anyone who desires to see how an effective preacher handles his material on church and community occasions.

Gedanken fuer Kasualreden, by Ernest Rotermund, pastor and superintendent (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924). To German readers this little book will prove exceedingly suggestive. It contains texts and brief paragraphs covering all sorts of occasions on which a Christian preacher may be expected to speak.

CHAPTER I

ADVENT

This familiar word is derived from the Latin and means "coming." While it is more properly the term for a season rather than a single festival, we speak of the Sunday which inaugurates the period as "Advent." The exact location of Advent in the calendar year is determined in reference to St. Andrew's Day, which falls on November 30. The Sunday nearest to this is Advent Sunday. It inaugurates a season of four weeks, closing with the Sunday preceding Christmas, the purpose of this season being to furnish a period of particular preparation for the joy of this great festival of gladness. It is useless to spend time discussing the exact date of the birthday of Jesus. It is set definitely in the Christian calendar on December 25, and Advent is a season of preparation for it. The great subject of the coming of Christ, both into his human incarnation and as the regnant Lord, is appropriate to the sermon on Advent Sunday. If the former aspect of the subject is taken, the Advent sermon will inevitably be similar in content to that which is preached at Christmas. The larger aspects of the Incarnation will be drawn upon for sermon material. The preacher will show how human longing for God is satisfied through Christ as the revelation of the Father's love. If the latter is chosen, the preacher must settle in his own mind the various problems connected with the final or the second Advent of Christ. This matter is so closely bound up with contro-

versial questions that it cannot be discussed here. Whatever view is held personally, every preacher ought to orient himself intelligently in reference to the various teachings prevalent today regarding the second coming of Christ, and should preach as he thinks the weight of evidence holds. Certainly the doctrine of the near Advent of Christ to establish his Kingdom was a part of the thought of the first followers of Jesus and has played a great part in the history of the Christian people. The apocalyptic factor in the New Testament is conspicuous for its force and vividness.[1] The passages which may be cited as proof texts are familiar; conspicuous among them is I Thess. 4:13–18. On the other hand may be found a somewhat different conception of the matter, especially as reflected in the Fourth Gospel. The following suggestions of texts appropriate to Advent are taken from the latter field:

CHRIST IN OUR MIDST

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.—Matt. 18:20.

Christ comes in unseen fellowship into every situation which is unified by loyalty to him on the part of the group.

The conditions.—What does "gathered in my name" mean? It may be only a common title borne by the group, a "Christian" church. But in oriental usage it involved much more. The name stood for the very nature or character of the

[1] In addition to the New Testament, various aspects of the doctrine may be found in I. M. Haldeman, *Ten Sermons on the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Fleming H. Revell Co., 1916); James M. Gray, *Prophecy and the Lord's Return* (Revell, 1917); Shirley Jackson Case, *The Millennial Hope* (University of Chicago Press, 1918); James M. Campbell, *The Second Coming of Christ* (Methodist Book Concern, 1919).

person. Therefore those who are united in the name of Jesus Christ are obedient to the purposes of Jesus as they understand them; loyal to the spirit of Christ as they seek to repeat it in their own endeavors to live well; and dedicated to the central and constant unity of the group in which Christ dwells as an unseen but real Presence.

The promise.—It is in the present tense: "there am I." It does not call for physical vision to see this. The greater part of the realities in any human situation do not appear to the physical senses at any one time. The unseen always is more than the seen. Christ may be felt and appreciated. He may be accepted and obeyed. He may be loved and followed. In these ways he may come to us in all the relations of life. He may abide with us. He may be our unseen Lord and Teacher and Friend.

LOVE'S CHOSEN GUESTS

If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.—John 14:23.

The test of love is obedience to the demands of its object; and when Christ is fully loved, God dwells in the lover's heart.

The invitation.—Whenever guests are called to a home or a fellowship of any kind, an invitation is sent out. It is worded cordially and sent in season to insure favorable consideration. The invitation which the Divine Guest accepts is given in the winsome terms of yearning love and an obedient life. Before we have a right to expect God as our Guest, we must be ready to exercise our love and yield our lives to his command.

The response.—It is cast in three forms. God answers our love with a yet deeper love of his own. This is a true experience in every phase of life: he that would have friends must show himself friendly. Then God comes into our hearts, into our homes, into our fellowships of every kind, into our

churches. He not only comes, but he also abides. The smallest failure is not going to drive him away, for the Divine Guest never is fickle. His presence with us will outlast our transient human life; it will extend beyond any of our human experiences; it will endure forever.

NOT FORSAKEN

I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you.—John 14:18.

The marginal translation for desolate is *orphans*. God does not forsake his children, and Christ will not leave us desolate.

This fleeting world.—It takes time to learn that so much which we desire permanently to possess slips from our grasp and disappears like the bubbles blown by a laughing child which collapse at his touch. Time does not fly; it stays and watches us pass, as in the Chicago "Fountain of Time" by Lorado Taft. Wealth eludes us. Honors are soon forgotten. Monuments decay. The world leaves us like orphans crying in the night.

The abiding Christ.—Christ comes and stays. His great purposes become permanent satisfactions for all our strivings. His peace remains, however fiercely the storms may beat upon us. His joy endures when the utmost of our pleasures have failed to satisfy us. His love outlasts the stars and remains the one enduring achievement of all our life.

CHAPTER II

SAINTS' DAYS

The call for preaching on these especial occasions will depend upon the place which such events hold in the history and traditions of the various religions communions. The large space occupied in certain historic faiths by days devoted to the recognition of great religious experiences and noble examples of living indicates values which ought not to be overlooked, even by those churches which ordinarily give scant recognition to such occasions. Surely the time spent in reflection upon the masters of the spiritual life and on the cardinal events of Christian history possesses practical worth which every follower of Christ ought not to miss.

In preparing a sermon for such an especial occasion, the general meaning of the word "saint" deserves consideration. It was the early name for Christians. They were the *hagioi*—the holy, the whole, the complete. When St. Paul wrote his letters to the "saints" in the various congregations and communities, he was laboring under no delusions as to the complete moral perfection or sinlessness of his friends. He knew his own self too well, and his experience with men was too wide, to allow him to forget that the treasure of the gospel life was contained "in earthen vessels." He recognized, however, that those who had come into fellowship with Christ had experienced an inner change and an outer transformation that could be described by no less strong and vivid words than "a

new creation" (II Cor. 5:17). Therefore, to characterize Christians as saints is not to ascribe to them qualities so supernatural that they are sundered from their fellows; they are, however, placed in the class of those who are striving to attain the complete life through their union with God in Christ. By all possible ties that are not inconsistent with their spiritual quest, they are united in all happy human relationships with their comrades. They are "saints," however, and they belong in a particular group. This deserves recognition.

In a technical sense, the Christian "saints" are those who have been canonized by ecclesiastical action and whose names are included in a closed list. The function of these accredited persons as "patron saints" of individuals and communities and the worth of their "intercession" are matters on which there is wide difference of opinion and which need not concern us at this point. In churches where the saints are officially recognized and highly honored, sermons on the days set apart to their veneration are most fitting. The various *Lives of the Saints* will yield the necessary material for such discourses. The faith and needs of the congregation will condition the sermon on these occasions.

The practical value for modern life, derived from the lives and characters of the saintly men and women of the past, is always worthy of consideration. Whenever human nature finds expression in a noble life, every member of the race is quickened and inspired to attempt to live in the same way. Added worth is imparted to personality by the experience of the men and women who deserve the titles of "saint." No young man who has come into inti-

mate knowledge of the life of David Livingstone or St. Francis of Assisi ever can think of himself or of others as "common or unclean." We are inevitably lifted to higher levels of aspiration and resolution by our better acquaintance with these moral and spiritual leaders of the race.

Two general principles are worthy of consideration in preparing to preach on any Saint's Day:

One of these is the preacher's effort to show that, however high the standard may be, every Christian is warranted in expecting that he will reach the goal. Only a few boys ever can achieve the station of Washington or Lincoln; only a few girls can become Florence Nightingales or Clara Bartons. But every Christian can set out to live in Jesus' way and expect to succeed. There are no favorites of fortune in the splendid effort to become a Christian saint. Canonization is for only a few; but sainthood is for all, the humblest and the highest.

Therefore, a second principle is the appeal on these great occasions for dedication of life to the high and holy enterprise of living so closely in relation to Christ that the graces of Christian character and the beauties of Christian experience will finally become manifest in men and women who are neither geniuses nor adepts, but just plain human beings whose lives are hallowed by the holy intention to follow Jesus in the sweet reasonableness of the gospel life.

The following selections have been made, not in the effort to be comprehensive or to suit any particular creed, communion, or individual preference, but solely to illustrate how wide the range of choice is and how widely,

both within and outside the limits of official canonization, the communion of saints extends.

Additional suggestions for practical work in this subject may be found in chapter viii, "Birthdays of National Leaders," and chapter xxii, "All Saints' Day."

The following dates are included in the calendar of the United Lutheran Church in America:

Dec. 21, St. Thomas, Apostle
Dec. 26, St. Stephen, Martyr
Dec. 27, St. John, Apostle, Evangelist
Feb. 24, St. Matthias, Apostle
April 25, St. Mark, Evangelist
May 1, St. Philip and St. James, Apostles
June 24, Nativity of St. John the Baptist
June 29, St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles
July 25, St. James the Elder, Apostle
Aug. 24, St. Bartholomew, Apostle
Sept. 21, St. Matthew Apostle, Evangelist
Sept. 29, St. Michael and All Angels
Oct. 18, St. Luke, Evangelist
Oct. 28, St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles
Nov. 30, St. Andrew, Apostle

From this list we have selected the first among the canonized saints.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE LIKE-MINDED IN CHRIST

I believe . . . . in the communion of saints.—Apostles' Creed.

This early Christian creed grew out of the practical experiences of the friends of Jesus.

The need of fellowship.—The religious life is like all other phases of human living in that it cannot be completed apart

from the fullest possible sharing in the experiences of others. Just as a baby left alone would perish, so the Christian droops and dies if he is separated from the supporting life of others. We need each other in common religious service, in sorrow, in thought, in study, in victory, and in the supreme experience of death. We share our faith, our hope, and our love.

The culture of fellowship.—The Christian relations of fellowship grow as do other human relations. We cannot withdraw into ourselves and expect others to serve us. Then mutual confidence must come into play; we must trust one another even when we do not fully understand one another. Also we must be patient with human faults and failures. The finest Christian fellowship does not come to flower and fruitage in a short time; therefore we must wait and trust and work.

The rewards of fellowship.—The communion of those who are like-minded with Christ brings the richest rewards and the deepest satisfactions possible to human life. There are no joys to be purchased with money that can compare with the sharing of a common devotion to Christ, common thought concerning the meaning of his teaching and example, common effort to follow him in the way of life which we call Christian, common experience of strength that he gives day by day.

FROM DOUBT TO CONFIDENCE

Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.—John 20: 29.

John 20: 24–29 gives the experience of St. Thomas which led up to the words of Jesus in the text. It reveals three aspects of St. Thomas' character:

The honest doubter.—There was no scorn or contempt in the fair questioning of St. Thomas. He did not raise questions in a spirit of caviling. He could not be true to his experience

and not ask for further confirmation of the faith that was expected of him. To doubt is not to sin. We must seek for the warrants of faith. "There lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half our creeds," wrote Tennyson.

The convinced believer.—In the case of St. Thomas, faith or conviction followed evidence that was presented to his physical senses. This is one way in which proof may be furnished. There are other grounds equally valid. Alfred Tennyson found them in the certain affirmation of the affections, as his "own dim life" taught him that "life must live forevermore." Frederick W. Robertson found them through "an obedient life," which became an "organ of knowledge." "Act and you shall know," he said. Belief is not credulity: it rests on valid grounds.

The happy Apostle.—Jesus sent St. Thomas out on his life of love and labor with the promise of happiness resting upon him. He was no longer torn by doubt. He was commissioned to a happy service, a happy fellowship with other friends of Jesus, and a happy comradeship with the Christ who, although unseen, was nearer to him than any visible human friend.

DAVID LIVINGSTONE, EXPLORER OF THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY

But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.—Heb. 11:16.

The material for this sermon is to be found in any one of the biographies of David Livingstone. That there has been a tendency to idealize his work and character, as is inevitable in every similar case, admits of no doubt. When all the conclusions of the most critical and accurate historians are reckoned with, however, Livingstone still stands out as a high and

noble example of Christian manliness and devotion. One of the most accessible biographies is *The Life of David Livingstone* by Thomas Hughes, the author of the "Tom Brown" books. He writes as the ardent admirer of his hero; but the book is essentially accurate, and the estimate of Livingstone's character trustworthy. The great explorer is one of the satisfactory saints of the church universal, and the message of his life is timely for the modern world.

CHAPTER III

THANKSGIVING DAY

Either on the Sunday preceding Thanksgiving Day or in a religious service on the day itself, a sermon appropriate to the occasion will be called for annually. The discourse must suit the event, whether it be in the preacher's own church or at a union service.

Fundamental to all preaching on Thanksgiving Day is the obligation of every living person to be truly grateful for the good gifts of God. A restudy of the grounds and the grace of gratitude is an excellent preliminary for the Thanksgiving Day sermon. The hardness of the ungrateful disposition is evident from even a casual study of human experience. The child who accepts everything in the home and never returns a grateful response is out of key with all that makes family life beautiful and happy. To walk through life demanding everything and grateful for nothing is to tread a lonely way.

On the other hand, gratitude is one of the fine marks of the Christian spirit and character. The literature of Christian devotion is rich in expressions of thankfulness to God the Giver of all life. Especially is this true of the Psalms. They are shot through with the golden threads of thanksgiving. Dip in anywhere and you are soon singing the praises of Jehovah the Bountiful. These gifts are not received because the singer has the right to demand them; they flow forth from the largess of the divine love. The writers of the Psalms do not give thanks because they

must do so as solemn duty; their gratitude wells forth as springs in the hills. Their songs have the spontaneous rapture of birds welcoming the dawn. This is the natural response of the human heart to the gifts of God.

The warrants for thanksgiving are as many and varied as is the whole range of human experience. The most apparent of these is the richness of our physical life, especially in America. We are inclined to take the "creature comforts" of life as a matter of course. Thanksgiving Day is an excellent occasion on which to make the ultimate reference of all these blessings to God. The sun rises, the crops mature, the seasons come and go; but behind it all is the love and wisdom of God. These accepted blessings, like sunlight and daily food, are divine gifts for which we ought to say, "Father, I thank Thee."

Another forgotten subject for gratitude is our national blessings, physical, political, and religious. We live in a rich land, in an age electric with stimulating and ennobling influences. On Thanksgiving Day it is well to rehearse these facts and call for grateful response from the people. Wise laws, sound learning, high ideals, spiritual privileges, are not matters merely of clever human devising. They are the gift of God and ought to be so received and acknowledged. America is rich and powerful. This may be accepted in smug satisfaction, or it may be received as a solemnizing ground of obligation and regarded as a gift of God for which we are supremely grateful.

There may be particular situations in the community which will give point and material to the Thanksgiving Day sermon. The discerning preacher will capitalize any such condition and use the privilege of preaching to voice

the expression of gratitude or to promote the particular community program, always, of course, preserving the dignity and typical values of his sermon.

Another particular resource which may contribute material for the sermon on Thanksgiving Day is the interpretation of patriotism in the terms of gratitude and religious passion. Sermons on national holidays are the most appropriate means of expressing patriotism, but these finer shades of it may well be expressed on Thanksgiving Day.

The following suggestions are made in the light of the preceding general observations:

THANKSGIVING DUTIES

O give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon his name;
Make known his doings among the peoples.

—I Chron. 16:8.

Give thanks.—The most obvious of all duties on such a day. We give thanks not only by what we say but also by what we do. Our words and acts are important; our whole temper is still more a proof of our gratitude.

Worship God.—A reverent life is another way of showing our thanks to God. When we call upon his name, we do not simply ask God for what we want; we also subject our whole life to him. This is an expression of gratitude also.

Bear witness.—The world comes to know God by means of the testimony of those who have found him. The best way in which to demonstrate the reality of God and his love is to show the world how God is using us in the accomplishment of his will on earth. The most valid evidence concerning God is furnished by the example of those who are living in such union with him that their lives display his purpose and power.

MANIFOLD THANKSGIVING

Giving thanks always for all things.—Eph. 5:20.

There is danger that we shall express our gratitude only on certain days and for certain blessings. Against this limited idea of Thanksgiving Day the text indicates two enlargements:

Always.—Thanksgiving must become a permanent temper of the spirit. Not only on the great days but on all the days we are to show our gratitude for God's gifts. This makes daily life rich and happy. It is a constant testimony to our reverence and love.

For everything.—We must not be grateful merely for that which we like or want; it is also necessary to be grateful for what God sends us, even if we did not choose it. Sometimes there is more cause for gratitude in the fact that something was withheld than in the granting of our desires.

GOD'S GOODNESS TO AMERICA

He hath not dealt so with any nation.—Ps. 147:20.

Discuss first the signs of God's wonderful dealing with America: in its natural resources; in its great history; in its blending of races; in its strategic position among the nations of the earth.

Then point out the opportunity of America: in its power to unite the peoples of the earth; in the influence of its democracy and religion upon the world; in its peculiar privilege of leading in the building up of God's Kingdom.

AN OLD-TIME THANKSGIVING DAY

Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.—Neh. 8:10.

Thanksgiving Day is a holy day as well as a holiday. It is not observed primarily as a day of eating and merriment. It

is also a time when we think through the deeper relations of life and take new starts.

But the home feast is a part of it. To eat the fat and drink the sweet is one way in which to express our love and thanks to God.

The grace of charity must be exercised, and portions sent to the needy. The gift without the giver is bare; and so it is necessary to do something more than merely send a gift. It is a day for personal calls and the sharing of life.

Universal happiness ought to mark the day. Not only in families but throughout the nation it should be a day of joy.

The real source of the strength in which we rejoice is God. Thanksgiving Day must never leave God out. The purpose of the day is to bring us nearer one another because we have come closer to our heavenly Father.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTMAS

The universal observance of the day devoted to the anniversary of the birth of Jesus, the atmosphere of joy pervasive in every home and community, the exhaustless meaning of the story of the event in the "little town of Bethlehem" so long ago, unite in making the sermon on the Sunday nearest Christmas a delightful privilege.

The best general preparation for the Christmas sermon lies in vivifying the story in one's imagination until all the wonderful details of it as they are given in the gospels stand out clearly in their graphic beauty. Certainly, as one reads again the narrative, its sincerity and genuineness must be vivid and commanding. No forger would have put his story so simply and directly. It is a beautiful experience to sit down again with the gospels and let the mind play across the swiftly moving scenes and the changeful moods of the story as it is told from different points of view.

Another practical source of help in the preparation of this sermon is found in the pictures which are so abundant and available. Few preachers ever have visited Palestine or seen the colors and costumes of the unchanging Orient. There are hundreds of pictures, however, which present the colorful and moving story. These make the events attending the Nativity real and vital to the imagination and must not be omitted from the resource from which the Christmas sermon is drawn. The preacher who tries

to represent the story to his mind in this way will find himself uplifted and thrilled as he allows the scenes to unfold in his imagination.

There is a deeper and more satisfactory source of material than this, however, available to the preacher of the Christmas sermon. In the Nativity as an event, the Incarnation as a fact takes concrete form. Remember how Phillips Brooks constantly centered his preaching about this fundamental Christian truth. The fact that God entered into human life and expressed himself in the person and experience of Jesus so clearly that all we need to know of the Father we can discover in the Christ is vested with creative power when once it takes hold on us. No preacher can stand in the presence of that august truth and not feel himself quickened to more profound thought and urgent speech by the compulsion of it. It is a sublime and precious fact. To proclaim and explain it is a privilege. Preachers seldom think of the Christmas sermon as an evangelistic opportunity; yet this is precisely what it is. In the truest sense of the word the "good news" to be proclaimed in the Christmas sermon is the holiest and most heartening message that the world ever has heard. It ought to be uttered with the greatest conviction, assurance, and joy.

One of the problems in connection with preaching at Christmas is the cramping of time for the sermon on account of the amount of music that is generally made a part of the order of public worship on that day. The sermon will have to be shortened in many cases, but the preacher ought to have adequate time for his message. Twenty-five minutes at least ought to be available for the

sermon. If the laws of condensation are observed, it will be possible to preach with satisfactory completeness in this space of time.

Let the Christmas sermon put the real message of the day in as fresh forms as may be found. It is too great an occasion for merely obvious remarks. The story of Christmas is so familiar, and the truth enshrined in it has been stated so often, that new ways of expressing it are difficult to find; but they will come out of the preacher's earnest study and thought, and the Christmas message will have a new ring in it.

OUR CHRISTMAS TRIBUTE

And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. —Matt. 2:11.

We bring our worship and tribute to the Mother and Child on every Christmas Day. What is it to be today?

Gold.—That is the gift for a king. Christ is the true king of all loyal Christians. He has the right to reign over us. His will is our royal law.

Frankincense.—It is the gift for worship. It stands for the reverent adoration which we render to Christ on this Christmas Day. It is his due. He is worthy of all that our hearts can render of love and loyalty.

Myrrh.—It was used for the burial of the body. It represents the divine sacrifice of our Lord. We bring him our Christmas gratitude for his sacrificial life and death. By it we are shown the will of God and saved from our sins.

THE CHRISTMAS PEACE SONG

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.—Luke 2:14.

The world is the place in which the glory of God is to be revealed and realized. God's glory is in his love and purpose. As we realize the love and the purpose of God, we are bringing honor to him and making the great Christmas song real.

The world is the place in which peace is to be realized. But this will not come by acts of legislatures. Peace comes only to and through those who enjoy the good pleasure of God. It is when men and women meet the expectations of the divine good will that peace may be assured among the warring nations. Therefore the best way to bring peace on earth is to unite all men in a league of love and service which will merit the divine approval.

GOD'S CHRISTMAS GIFT

But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.—Gal. 4:4, 5.

God takes time to bring his plans into fulfilment. The great gift was not given until God knew that the right time had come. His patience is boundless.

Christ came into our human experience in order that he might show us how the children of God are to live. His God is ours. He reveals us to ourselves. His life sets forth our normal life.

Redemption is the issue of the Christmas gift of God. There is something done for us that makes us able to conquer sin and death.

GOOD NEWS AT CHRISTMAS

Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.—Luke 2:10, 11.

Good news to all the world.—The happiest message that ever has been given the world is the evangel of Christmas. It tells of victory over sin, of hope for every hard and bitter day, of power to live an endless life. It is for all the world. It never has reached the world yet. It is our duty to give to the world.

A Savior and Lord.—This good news gathers about a person. He is the Savior from sin. Through faith in him we attain the power to conquer evil. He is a Lord and Master whose service is perfect freedom and in whose comradeship we conquer every enemy of the soul.

CHAPTER V

NEW YEAR'S

The observance of New Year's Day is generally chiefly social in character and has few of the religious characteristics that mark the Christmas holiday time. It has a definite content of serious purpose about it, however, which deserves some recognition in the church worship on the Sunday nearest the day itself. The following considerations are pertinent:

The year that has passed has tender significance in the minds of many people. To certain homes profound and searching experience may have come. Death and sorrow, or joy and success, have entered in some way into the experience of all members of the congregation. The lessons of the past, thus varied and significant, may be touched upon with becoming reserve. This makes the sermon timely in its reference to the past.

The sermon on New Year's Sunday will also turn the thought of the congregation to the future, that unknown and mystic world of experience which embraces all our tomorrows. Just as the lift of the great mountains and the sight of the vast forest solemnizes and chastens the spirit, so the prospect of the untried way in the coming year refines and elevates the temper of thoughtful people. This insures a readiness to receive a message appropriate to New Year, which makes the preacher's task attractive and relatively easy.

Perhaps the first and most obvious step to take in

preparation for preaching on New Year's Sunday is to survey the past year in order to discover what its especial lesson has been. The significant community changes, the great events or movements of the world, the great personalities that have passed out of earthly life—all these are fruitful fields to review as the preacher thinks on his theme. Out of these must invariably come some principles and lessons that will be made vivid when they are thus associated with events still retained in the memory of the congregation. Whatever the text or subject may be, there will be material at hand for fresh and timely illustration.

The sermon on New Year's Sunday will be keyed to the note of hope and courage. The future always ought to be faced by Christians "without fear and with manly hearts." It is an occasion on which the congregation should be encouraged and inspired. This will not call for a sermon filled with shallow and shouting optimism. The problems and dangers will be recognized; but the greater assurance of faith in God will be brought out clearly. In these days of bewilderment and hesitation the people need especially to be given a new sense of the reality and power of God.

In its practical effect, the sermon on New Year's Sunday will put clearly the great call for service in the world at large and in the local community. It will show that there are mighty imperatives in life to which response must be bravely given. Whether it be in the narrow range of personal character-building or in the international relationships of the nation, there is the same call to undertake with new dash and definiteness the program of Christ for

a changed world. This must be set out vividly and presented with force.

Then the sermon on New Year's Sunday may voice the call for personal devotion to the realization of this program. The preacher must ask and expect that personal service will be given to realize the call that has been sounded in the sermon. Consecration to new duties must issue from the appeal of the gospel on this particular day of new visions and deeper dedication of spirit.

The significance of this occasion has been well expressed in a recent sermon:

> New Year's Day, the milestone of the year's flight; long marked and observed, to be sure, by generations before, but now come to be with us the day for an invoice of life, for individual stocktaking of character. It is the time when we review the past, hopefully scan the future, and seriously, sometimes mercilessly, scrutinize the present with the view to forsaking the baser levels of life, lifting our ideals and improving our conduct and character.[1]

In many communities and churches it is the custom to "watch the old year out and the new year in." Church groups often gather for a varied service, sometimes beginning in the early evening and culminating at the midnight stroke of the clock when the New Year is ushered in. The service may call for a sermon, in which case the preacher will make his subject bear with especial directness upon the occasion. The general suggestions just made apply to a Watch Night or a Sunday sermon.

In preparing for this occasion the following texts and subjects may be found suggestive:

[1] Rev. Gerald Culberson, "The Persuasion of Better Things," in Thornton, *Special Sermons for Special Occasions* (1921), p. 22.

THE CROWNED YEAR

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness;
And thy paths drop fatness.

—Ps. 65:11.

The purpose of this sermon is to display the way in which the love and goodness of God have crowned the year. It might also be used at Thanksgiving.

Display this in the wealth of nature. The earth has answered to man's toil with riches; the mines have yielded their wealth.

Display this in the realm of friendships and kinships. How much our friends have helped us! How much we have been able to do for our friends! How the great leaders of the community and nation have blessed us!

Display this in the world of growing knowledge. Each year registers man's larger insight and firmer control of the universe. We learn better how to live with one another.

Display this in the sphere of love and good will, which make headway in spite of apparent setbacks. The program of Christ's Kingdom is still the greatest ideal that humanity ever has struggled toward.

NEW AND OLD

Therefore every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.—Matt. 13:52.

This text outlines the principle of development which runs through all life, and is especially worthy of consideration when the relation of the old and the new is called into consideration at New Year's.

Not the new alone. The new is agreeable and desirable. It is necessary in order to true growth. But it is also hazardous. It often leads to excess and failure. To think of it alone

on New Year's is to fail to estimate the forces that work out true development.

Not the old alone. The old is also desirable and agreeable. It is also necessary for true growth. What humanity has learned in the progress of the centuries must not be thrown aside. But the old alone is hazardous. It tends to fetter freedom. It obscures the vision necessary to fresh discovery of truth.

The new *and* the old. Each needs the other. The new ought to grow out of the old. It is nourished by the old. It completes the old. The old ought to find its complete expression in the new. It must grow into the new. Thus each complements the other. Such a balanced relation insures true progress.

THE FASCINATION OF THE UNKNOWN

For ye have not passed this way heretofore.—Josh. 3:4.

Study the incident to get its significance: How did the Israelites attempt the untried way?

Reverently.—They followed the ark at a distance. There was no flippancy as they undertook the new tasks. The solemn awe of the occasion was upon them.

Purely.—The people sanctified themselves; they put the evil out of their hearts and actions. They humbled their hearts before God and sought pardon for their sins.

Courageously.—When they had purified themselves and accepted the new duties reverently, they went forward bravely. They honored God enough to trust him. They did not mortgage their future triumph by fear.

A DOOR OPENED

Behold, I have set before thee a door opened.—Rev. 3:8.

The figure is graphic. Study its meaning. A door opened before us into what?

Into a deeper appreciation of the meaning and value of life. It is worth while, beautiful, evoking our best efforts.

Into finer and more blessed relations with our fellows. We live in love and kindness, and we must be more helpful kinsmen and comrades.

Into richer community service. There are tasks to be done in our own neighborhoods which call for our personal help; we must give ourselves as well as our money.

Into deeper knowledge and experience of Christ. We know God when we know Christ. We know our own souls and the meaning of life when we know Christ. He is the goal of knowledge and the object of love.

WATCH!

And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.—Mark 13:37.

"Eternal vigilance is the price of life." Note the perils against which we are to be constantly on guard:

External.—Those arising from the situation in which we are found: materialism, envy, greed. The struggle for physical life must not assume such predominance that it dethrones the struggle for the spirit.

Those arising from our comradeships: personal relations, potent and constant. Watch the influence of our friendships on our choices and motives.

Internal.—Watch the master motives. Selfish purposes tend to hold the entire field and drive out motives which regard the good of others.

Low forms of life look attractive. Envy and lust are constantly in action assaulting the soul. Watch the coarse and vulgar. Keep the brutal in subjection.

How to cultivate watchfulness. Decide to watch, and stick it out; in time the habit will increase. But the will must be constantly alert. The battle never will be over.

"RING OUT, WILD BELLS"

Use canto 106 of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* for the text. Have this printed or reproduced in some way so that copies may be in the hands of the people. Study it carefully; make an analysis; condense the points, if thought desirable; then prepare material for a running comment on it. The items are:

1. Old vs. new.
2. False vs. true.
3. Grief vs. resignation.
4. Riches vs. poverty.
5. Partisanship vs. nobleness.
6. Sin vs. goodness.
7. Civic pride and slander vs. common love of good.
8. Foul disease vs. health.
9. War vs. peace.
10. *The Christ that is to be.*

CHAPTER VI

DAYS OF PRAYER AND FASTING

The custom of observing either a Week of Prayer or certain Days of Prayer is not universally prevalent; nor is it now kept up in certain Christian churches, as it was in former days. Nevertheless, almost every church year sees the recurrence of days or periods set apart for prayer, and the preacher must be ready to prepare one or more sermons on this fundamental factor in religious experience.

The danger of unreality must be guarded against in a sermon on this occasion. A preacher must be sure that he is appealing for something in which he himself profoundly believes and which is warranted by his own practice. Captain Bertalot, Waldensian chaplain with the Italian forces in the Great War, in describing an interview with a dying soldier, said that the man kept fast hold of his hand and looked him through and through as if he were determined to know whether the chaplain believed every word that he was speaking. He felt that he could say no word to the wounded comrade unless he believed it himself to the uttermost. And in no less degree this seriousness of purpose and conviction must lie behind the sermon on a Day of Prayer.

Manifestly, the very first step in the preparation of a sermon for this occasion must be the thorough validation of the preacher's own conception of prayer and its practice. Perhaps there is no other single subject concerning

which there is more earnest inquiry in the modern religious world than this. The question which arises inevitably to one who is trained to think and live in a world of science is simply this, "Has prayer any place in the religion of the modern man?" Another and no less urgent question is, "What is prayer?" These questions are engaging the minds of ministers with a searching urgency which is the sign of healthy vitality. This discussion of the problems of preaching on church and community occasions is no place for even a brief survey of the subject. In a few words it may be said that prayer has a larger rather than a lessened place in a world of science and that, concisely and broadly defined, prayer is the practice of the presence of God. It is therefore a far wider engagement than the saying of prayers on stated occasions.

Among the phases of prayer as conceived by the Christian in the modern world are these:

It is more than mere petition, although definite requests and specific intercession are essential to it in its integrity. It is union and communion with God. It is fellowship and discipleship. It is fusion of purpose with the divine, and it is specifically the incentive and support to the doing of the will of God as this is apprehended in many ways and for all occasions. This broad and deep foundation for Christian prayer needs to be laid in the minds of church members today.

Prayer is both social and individual. The best example of the union of these two accents is seen in the practice of Jesus. He went habitually to the temple and the synagogue; but he retired into solitude for prayer,

and, when it was necessary as a healthy protest against hollow formalism, he commanded his disciples to observe the same practice. Christians must pray both with one another and in isolation from one another. Each practice reinforces and vitalizes the other. Public worship and private devotion are mutual factors in the discipline of Christian living.

The energies of prayer need to be emphasized in the modern world. Some years ago Sir Oliver Lodge, a scientist, challenged Christians to return to their confidence in prayer as "a mighty engine of achievement." He insisted that through prayer energy is released which can produce changes in human life. We do not need to show others why this is true so much as we need to be convinced anew that it is true. Through prayer, changes are wrought which cannot be wholly accounted for on the basis of what we know concerning the causes of those changes. There is a new call for faithful and confident prayer as the effectual means by which definite results are accomplished in human experience.

More help is needed also in defining the technique of prayer. The disciples of Jesus felt this when they asked the Master to teach them how to pray. His reply was the paternoster, which is not a form of sacred words but a pattern according to which prayer may be ordered and phrased. The literature of the Christian people is rich in great prayers, which ought to be brought more frequently to the attention of members of churches and made available in more usable forms. The observance of stated seasons for prayer and devotion ought to be urged, and especially the utilizing of spare moments and frag-

ments of time for meditation and prayer should be encouraged. The sermon on the Day of Prayer may well be utilized for this practical purpose. Many people are eager to form habits of devotion but do not know how to go about it.

One particular aspect of prayer is worthy of more detailed discussion. Prayer as intercession presents one of the gravest problems with which the modern Christian has to grapple as he attempts to fit the idea and practice of prayer into the new world that has been given to us by science. Adoration, thanksgiving, and consecration are all comparatively easy to understand in the idea of prayer. Petition for spiritual gifts and for the satisfaction of worthy personal desires do not present a grave problem. But intercession, as petition by ourselves on behalf of others, is a more difficult matter.

This has been an essential factor, however, in all prayer, and there must be a place for it in any complete understanding of modern prayer and worship. Apparently we greatly need a new conception of intercession which will commend it to those who have become fascinated with the vast and growing knowledge of man and nature. Such an idea is proffered by Dr. G. A. Johnston Ross in a recent volume, *The Future of Christian Worship:* "It is the reference to God of the best and most unselfish wishes that we can cherish for our friends." This idea of intercession is worth careful reflection. We know that we all desire the highest good of those whom we truly love. There are no heights to which our yearning for them does not ascend. We may fail to seek earnestly the best gifts for ourselves when we are the victims of low moods; there

can be no doubt about our desires for the highest welfare of all those whom we truly love.

It is also a clear fact in human experience that we do not secure those desired ends for those we love in all cases, as we also fail in reaching the goals that we set for ourselves. In spite of the best and most prolonged endeavors, on our part and theirs, we all fail to reach our hearts' desires.

Now in this emergency, what are we to do? There is one available resource. Through intercessory prayer we "refer" these highest and holiest desires for others to the love and wisdom of God for guidance and satisfaction. Just as we have constantly to refer to wisdom and strength beyond our own in the case of all problems that we are unable to solve, so with reverent trust we refer these highest yearnings for others to God for satisfaction according to the rulings of his love and goodness.

This idea, it will appear at once, is quite different from any conception of intercession which would identify it with an effort to force or wheedle Almighty God into doing something which he would not otherwise do for those whom he loves and whose needs he knows better than we or they can possibly know them. It is like the familiar experience in family life in which a need or a problem is referred to parents in confidence by their children. Father and mother may have known all about the matter; they may have withheld their counsel or decision for a good purpose; when, however, the question is definitely referred to them, the whole transaction assumes a new meaning. It is in their hands now, and the children may wait happily until the decision is reached.

This conception of intercession escapes the repugnant factors in the crude notion that somehow God may be successfully bombarded into the granting of gifts and blessings. By the use of this conception of "reference" the subject of intercession comes into the world of reason and experience and is validated by the conduct of every family. Surely our needs and problems may safely be left in the hands of God, whose love and wisdom pass the reach of our highest thoughts, as far as the tenderness of a mother surpasses the comprehension of the baby that smiles into her eyes as she cuddles it to her heart. But the baby feels the pressure of the strong arms and is sure that nothing but the highest good lies within their shielding reach. So we leave our highest wishes for those we love in the hands of God and know that the best will be done.

The following suggestions may be found useful:

PRAYER FOR SUCCESS

> And let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us;
> And establish thou the work of our hands upon us;
> Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.
>
> —Ps. 90:17.

Is it right to pray for the success of our work? Our work has supreme value to ourselves. We put our very selves into it. Our work is valuable to God. He needs it for the success of his own work.

Therefore it is right to pray for success, and to pray that it may not be fleeting but may be established. We want permanence; God alone can give it.

The favor of God is the warrant for all our expectation of success. In the end it is the love and beauty of God that insures the realization of our ideals.

THE CONDITIONS OF PREVAILING PRAYER

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.—John 15:7.

This familiar promise seems to open the way to reliance upon the affirmative answer to prayer of every kind. The two conditional clauses are generally overlooked. These are of supreme importance.

Two conditions.—First, that the relation between Christ and the one who prays is so close that he may be said to "abide" in the same manner as the branch is a vital part of the vine. Second, that Christ's "words" so master and control Him that they may be said to abide in Him, as the whole life and resources of the vine are poured into the branch and stand at its service. This represents a complete union of purpose and will.

What will such a person pray for?—This perfect union of love and service excludes any prayer that is selfish, or any petition that is not based upon perfect accord with the will of God, or any request that is dictated by a merely temporary or superficial need. Such a condition of moral union with Christ will insure the highest, most reverent, most unselfish prayer. It will exclude all prayer as a test of God's power. It will guarantee the most complete evaluation of the prayer in the light of God's will.

Jesus is the example of this form of prayer.—In Gethsemane he prayed that he might be released from the impending trial; but he coupled with his petition a perfect consecration in the words "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Thus Jesus illustrated perfectly in his own practice the very words of his promise.

PRAYER AND DAILY LIVING

Take with you words, and return unto Jehovah: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and accept that which is good: so will we render as bullocks the offering of our lips.—Hos. 14:2.

The best of all prayers is the sacrifice of a right life.

The return home.—Like the Prodigal Son in the far country, we need to leave our lower life and come back to the true and happy relations with God to which he calls us. Prayer is the shortest path to God.

The true prayer.—It consists of two parts:

Forgiveness of sin. We pray for pardon. This must be preceded by sincere sorrow for sin and the resolute decision to forsake it. Help must be had from God to rid us of evil motives and bondage to wrong deeds. We are not strong enough to do this alone.

Consecration to better living. The prayer to be relieved from sin (negative) is followed by consecration to a holy life (positive). An offering of new purposes to do good must take the place of old habits to do evil. Thus deeds become prayers.

The sacrifice that God approves.—The worshiper brought the bullock or the animal sacrifice as the symbol of his penitence and new purpose. The forgiven suppliant brings his consecrated life as a more perfect sacrifice. His prayers and his decisions to do right are more acceptable than a bleeding animal. Thus prayer, issuing in a good life, becomes an acceptable form of worship.

STEADFAST PRAYER

Continuing stedfastly in prayer.—Rom. 12:12.

The practice of prayer is subject to ebb and flow. St. Paul urges his friends not to yield to this tendency but steadfastly to keep up the habit of prayer.

Even in times of spiritual dryness and fatigue.—The relations of human friendship exhibit periods when joy and enthusiasm in fellowship wane. It is best to keep on with the more formal relations at such times. This is not hypocrisy. It is simply the effort to carry through relations which have been enthusiastic, in confidence that the former zest and joy will return.

Steadfast in time and place.—There is real help in steadfast prayer when we keep up the habit as regards time and place. The familiar surroundings help, and the regular season encourages us. If the routine grows irksome, it still has value. The habit of common worship is as healthy and desirable as regularity in eating or sleeping.

Steadfast in spirit.—The memory of high days and enriching experience holds us when we are discouraged, like the memory of his rich hours to the writer of Pss. 42, 43. To recall these noble moods helps us to keep steadfast in the life of prayer. We can fan the embers into flame by recalling the times when God seemed near and the spiritual life real.

Steadfast in tuning the spirit to the impulses of God.—This is a specific help. We can, by deliberate choice, set ourselves into the temper of reverence and response to the movements of divine Love. This is more important, at certain times, than confession, or thanksgiving, or petition. Just to key ourselves to truth and beauty and goodness will often bring us back to an enriched experience of the joy and power of prayer. Thus prayer becomes a constant attitude of the soul.

Under the head of "Days of Prayer" comes the subject of preaching on Fast Days. The custom of proclaiming such occasions for community observance has practically ceased in the United States. Fasting still obtains in certain Christian communions, however, and it is possible

that the apparently outgrown custom may be temporarily restored in seasons of national crisis.

The growing observance of Lent makes the general religious practice of self-denial a matter of annual consideration in almost all Christian churches. The following suggestions are appropriate to the entire Lenten season, and especially to Ash Wednesday (see chap. ix):

PREPARATION FOR GREAT SERVICE

Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.—Ezra 8:21.

This text was used by Rev. John Robinson at the Day of Solemn Humiliation, when the Pilgrim Fathers began their journey from Leyden to America. The day was spent in the consideration of the meaning of the text as it applied to their adventure and in common prayer.

A humble heart is the best preparation for the undertaking of any great work. Reliance on human power alone is futile. Reliance on divine power alone may be only a sign of moral and spiritual cowardice. Reliance upon God coupled with the bravest and best human effort is the guarantee of success.

Out of true humility confident petition always grows. This is summed up in the prayer that God will be the Shower of the straight way. Not that he will miraculously carry us to the end of the way, but that he will show it so plainly that we shall not miss it.

The confident prayer is inclusive of the total adventure. It includes our material possessions, the objects of our love and care, our own selves in our highest intentions and deepest desires. Knowing the straight way as God shows it to us, we commit all we desire and possess to the adventure of faith.

SELF-DENIAL AND CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.—Acts 13:2, 3.

The function of physical self-denial is recognized in nearly all religions. It has wholesome effects on the human body. It clarifies moral and spiritual vision. It prepares for consecration to practical efforts to realize religious ideals in action.

This has been recognized in the history of the Christian religion and is a part of the practice of the religious life in many communions. In the modern world the self-denial represented by fasting is still a valid technique in two respects:

It becomes an avenue of revelation. Just as one must listen to music in order to hear it, and cannot expect to understand harmony when paying attention to the jangling noise of everyday life, so the tuning-in of the spirit through fasting and prayer is essential to the apprehension of God's will.

It attends the most effective dedication of personal love and labor to the cause of Christ. The brethren who sent their two comrades away on a hazardous journey were more keenly aware of the issues involved because they had fasted and prayed. The two missionaries were inspired and empowered by the self-denial of their friends.

THE FAST THAT GOD APPROVES

The Scripture passage for expository treatment is Isa. 58:3–9.

It was a time of elaborate popular religious ceremonial, particularly in respect to the observance of prayer and fasting. Yet the moral level of life was low and the people were sodden in sin. The people put their question bluntly: "What is the

use of all our religious zeal and practice when the result is that God disregards us?" The passage contains the answer of God in the words of the prophet.

The nature of a false fast is defined. It has all the show of ceremony. It is duly labeled as a righteous act. It brings satisfaction to one who thus interprets it and carries it out. It is entirely unconnected with the conduct of daily life. Those who are thus fasting still oppress others.

Then follows the definition of the true fast. It consists in something more than putting on sackcloch and strewing ashes. It does not exclude this; it complements the external signs of self-denial by justice and righteousness and charity, actually realized in daily life. Love, expressed in gracious deeds, is the crown of it all.

Finally comes the result of keeping the fast in the true way. Blessings will follow. God will hear and answer and guide. There will be no doubt in the minds of the people that the God whom they had apparently lost is surely found again.

HAPPY HEARTS AND GLAD FACES

The text is Matt. 6:16–18.

There are two apparent divisions:

The Pharisees fasted with every sign of sorrow for sin, not because they really felt any genuine repentance but because they wanted their fellows to see the doleful show and approve it. And men did see it, praised it, and that ended the business. The fasters secured what they wanted and had their reward.

Jesus now defines, as Isaiah did before him, a true fast, which was determined by the motives of the heart and not by external dress or manner. The text is not to be interpreted too literally. Jesus is using the familiar oriental method of overemphasis in order to make the point clear. If the ointment

merely displaced the ashes, then one fast might be as external and false as the other. The true fast unites sorrow and self-denial in the heart, repentance in motive and inward intention; and an apparently contradictory exterior might be the surer guaranty of this true fast than the accepted expressions. The one central reality is the inner experience.

The rewards of the first fast were human approval; of the second, the approbation of God.

CHAPTER VII

EPIPHANY AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

Epiphany, sometimes called Twelfth Day because it is celebrated on January 6, twelve days after Christmas, commemorates the manifestation of God to the world in Jesus Christ. According to Christian teaching, this gradual revelation began with the first promise and expectation of His appearing, became concrete in the earthly life of Jesus, and will be consummated when his reign shall be established in all the earth. Therefore Epiphany is especially associated with world-wide Christian missions. It is the day of the Christian year set apart to the consideration of this great objective of the Christian people, and is most fittingly observed by a sermon on missions. One Sunday is hardly enough for this purpose, however. More than one occasion during the calendar year ought to be devoted to the world-wide missionary purpose of the church and the responsibility of the individual in carrying it out. "Christian missions" is the general term by which to designate this vast and essential factor in the program of the universal Christian church. Another term might be chosen, for this has become somewhat threadbare, and in many congregations prejudice against it will be encountered. We seem able to find no better word, however, and it must therefore be employed.

In preparing the sermon for Missionary Sunday, the preacher must first of all assure himself again of the validity of his message as he restudies the warrants for

the universal meaning and claim of the Christian religion.

The missionary ideal and program of the Christian church rest permanently in what John Fiske called "the everlasting reality of religion." Every person and every civilization is bound to have its own religion; this is inevitable. If, therefore, a religion must be had, it ought to be the best possible religion. The experience of nineteen centuries has demonstrated that the Christian religion, in spite of all its flaws, is the best religion for the world. Therefore the Christian people are under the sublime imperative of presenting this religion to the world, not of enforcing it upon mankind. The mighty urge of this idea is creative when it is fully grasped.

Then the preacher ought to face fairly the desperate needs of the world today, both at home and in foreign lands. The old method of harrowing up the feelings of American Christians by lurid descriptions of heathen life obtains no longer. The more we know, however, of all that is excellent in the non-Christian religions, the deeper becomes our consciousness of the world's desperate need of help if the highest values of human life are to be realized. This does not lead us to despise other races but, rather, to seek yet the more earnestly to understand and help them.

Then it is clear that the universal reach of the Christian religion was defined by its founder. That Jesus so conceived it there can be no doubt. Although he lived in a little subject province of the vast Roman Empire, itself insignificant in comparison with the known world of today, with audacious vision he defined his mission

and truth as embracing the whole world. One stands with a sense of awe and admiration in the presence of this stupendous fact. Jesus was sure that nothing less than the whole wide world—all its living creatures, all its races and civilizations, all men everywhere and throughout all time—were compassed within the area of the religion whose founder he was. This fact ought to capture the preacher's imagination and thrill him in a new way as he undertakes to prepare his sermon for Missionary Sunday. The ambitions of an Alexander pale into insignificance before the splendor of this ideal of Jesus for a universal religion, which should conquer the world, not by the sword, but by the creative energies of love.

This ideal of Jesus has also inspired and controlled the great leaders of the Christian people during their entire history. The heroes of the faith have not been the men who have sat safely and comfortably at home shaping creeds and perfecting ritual. The real heroes and statesmen have been the flaming heralds of the cross, whose sacrifice and devotion have stopped at no barriers and have been stayed by no sufferings, but who have followed the feet of their Master up new Calvaries and who have, in their own places, endured his agony and bloody sweat. The great victories of the Christian faith have been won by its intrepid and fearless pioneers, sustained in all their struggles by the promised help of their Divine Lord. This record must kindle the preacher today as he finds it written large and lustrous on the pages of every century.

There is a new conception of Christian missions abroad in the world today, however; and the preacher

must not fail to understand and interpret it. The influence of the nationalist movements in all the world upon the Christian missionary ideal is registering radical changes. One of the conspicuous examples of this is found in E. Stanley Jones's *The Christ of the Indian Road.* In the older days, the whole ideal was quite simple: the nations were to be converted to Christianity and to accept their new religion in its Western form and at the hands of its Western representatives. So the great enterprise went on for centuries. Now, however, comes a new ideal. The other great world-religions are evaluated with fresh sense of their worth. The dignity of other races and civilizations is gradually coming to be appreciated, with a sobering influence upon the champions of Christianity in its Western forms. The building-up of a church that shall be consistent with the genius of the different civilizations and ultimately under their own guidance is seen to be the only true objective of the world-wide Christian enterprise. And the immense cost in time and money of this great project is appreciated with new vividness. This changes the outlook upon Christian missions and creates a definite problem for the preacher, challenging his thought, his imagination, and his power of clear statement.

The sources of material for the sermon on Missionary Sunday are wide in range and rich in yield. The first is missionary biography and history. The lives of David Livingstone or Mary Slessor are typical of the resources which may be used by the preacher. They may be had from public libraries or by loan from the collections of missionary societies or theological seminaries.

Another available source of fresh and stimulating

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material is found in the current numbers of the magazines of the denominational missionary boards and in the pamphlets issued by them. A letter requesting such timely matter will invariably bring a prompt and helpful reply.

It goes without saying that the preacher in his sermon on Missionary Sunday will not simply bring forward the dramatic and heroic factors in Christian missions, but also will dignify the subject and make it compelling by treating it as a vital and essential Christian movement, involving the noblest motives, the purest devotion, and the highest statesmanship. It may seem wise at times to meet the criticism of those who do not believe in foreign missions or who have heard disparaging reports as to actual conditions in foreign lands. The appeal that "charity begins at home" is true, so far as it goes, and we need more rather than less of it; but while charity begins at home, it ought never to stop there. As a matter of fact, the more Christian love we use at home the more we have for export; and the widow's cruse of oil is a parable of Christian good will for all the nations of the earth.

As to the criticism made against foreign missions and missionaries, they generally come from superficial American travelers, who never have made an honest, first-hand study of the facts, but have formed their opinions from the gossip of smoking-rooms on ocean steamers or in hotels where they have listened to judgments, prejudiced and distorted through the collision between selfish commercialism and the Christian ideals of the missionaries. Thorough investigation has almost never failed to yield a report approving Christian missionaries and their work in foreign lands.

The greater purpose of the missionary sermon, however, is not apologetic but practical. Through the supply of accurate information and the definition of the Christian ideal, the preacher moves on to awaken personal, practical co-operation in the foreign-missionary program of the church and to secure additional funds to maintain it. The budget is vital in missionary work, and the living church will guarantee it in loyalty to the command of Christ and the worth of the vast enterprise.

Suggestions for the sermon on Missionary Sunday may be gained from the following texts and subjects:

FISHERS OF MEN

And he saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.—Matt. 4:19.

Peter and Andrew were fishermen, busy at their work, when Jesus called them to come into a new life as his disciples and followers. He used a figure which they could not fail to understand: their new work was like that in which they had been engaged, only the object was not to be the fish in the Sea of Galilee, but to be the souls of men everywhere. Thus they were to be Christ's missionaries, and this is the unchanged modern call of Christ.

On the human side, this means that "casting the net" around those whom we can influence, in order to bring them into personal relations with Christ, is both the vocation and the avocation of the Christian. The means which we are to use for this conquest are as many as the objects of our love and labor are numerous and different. Conviction of the supreme value of the Christian faith, gracious and friendly words, consistent living, the investment of influence constantly and quietly exerted—all are a part of the technique.

The obstacles are many. Ancient prejudices are not easily dislodged. Old courses of action are not readily surrendered for those that displace them. Entrenched habits yield stubbornly. Shy and valuable fish never are easily caught.

The rewards are rich and satisfying. The souls of men are of infinite value. The greatest work in the world is to win men to Christ.

Note where the figure is imperfect. Fish, when caught, yield their lives; men, when caught, enter into more abundant life.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.—Matt. 28:18–20.

This is the Great Commission of Jesus, the missionary marching orders of the militant church, which never have been superseded, are not yet fulfilled, and which furnish the promise and prophecy of the supreme victory of the gospel.

The final authority.—The commandment grows out of the divine, universal, and eternal authority of the Commander. All power to give the commission and to guarantee its final success inheres in Christ. On this the Christian people can rely with unshakable confidence.

The mission of discipleship.—Christians are commanded to do for all the races that which has been done for them, namely, to lead them into discipleship of Christ. They are to learn how to live in his way, serve in his spirit, and fuse their very lives into union with him. This they achieve in time and through the practice of the Christian way.

The mission of obedience.—The lesson cannot be learned and the way cannot be followed except by the method of the

yielded life. Obedience is the path to knowledge, peace, and power.

The constant Presence.—In unseen strengthening fellowship Christ is the Comrade of the Christian in the execution of the Great Commission. The missionaries bear constant witness to the reality of this experience. The modern church in a changing world must carry out the Great Commission with new sacrifice and devotion.

THE WORLD'S "S O S"

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.—Acts 16:9.

There is one radio call which takes precedence of all others and to which attention must be given; it is the S O S call for help.

There is one cry to which the Christian church must never be for a moment indifferent; it is the beseeching S O S of humanity.

The dire physical and economic need of the world calls for Christian help. Medical and industrial missions are the Christian answer. These phases of missionary work are basic to the spiritual message and appeal.

The intellectual needs call loudly for help. While the mind is in bondage to ignorance and superstition, happiness and peace cannot be expected. Educational missions are the Christian answer to this poignant call.

The moral needs may be heard on every side. Christians often fail in reaching their own ethical ideals; but they know the superb moral requirements of Jesus and are bound to pass them on to others.

The spiritual needs of the world are most vocal of all. The races need the God of Jesus more than they need bread or

hospitals. At this point the supreme expression of Christian missions is discovered. The church must answer this call by the gift of Christ to the world.

THE WORLD-WIDE MISSION

But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.—Acts 1:8.

This is another expression of the Great Commission, the repetition of which shows how central it was in the thought of Jesus.

Its range.—The scope of the mission strangely matches the common divisions of missionary work today:

It begins with city missions (Jerusalem). The first point of attack and the center of expansion is the local community. This also defines the first field for the service of the church.

It extends to home missions (Judaea and Samaria). The county and the state and the homeland are next included.

It finally embraces foreign missions (the uttermost part of the earth). This is essential to the achievement of the world-wide goal of the gospel.

Its method.—Jesus always emphasizes the place and power of testimony in the accomplishment of the great mission. Bearing witness is not confined to the words of those who testify; the true witness for Christ gives evidence with nothing less than his total living. "Actions speak louder than words." Everything by which the gospel is affirmed is essential Christian testimony.

Its enduement.—The age-long experience of Christian missions establishes the fact that the sources of power do not lie in the material means, the technical skill, or even the human genius by which the movement is carried on, although all of

these are necessary. The final source is a spiritual enduement, the gift of the Holy Spirit, always waiting to be bestowed upon the consecrated church.

THE VISION OF A REDEEMED WORLD

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples.
—Luke 2:30, 31.

Jesus, the Redeemer and Lord, is the expression of God's infinite love manifested for the salvation of the whole world.

The reality of the vision.—It became concrete at last in the form of a little child. It was no longer a vague promise, or a prophetic hope, or a vast ideal. In Jesus Christ the substance of the vision assumed physical form. The hope was now united to a human person living among men.

The scope of the vision.—It was no longer salvation for a single race. No one civilization would enjoy its benediction. It reached as far as time in extent. It was as broad as all the races of earth. It was comprehensive as the manifold life of man. This released imagination and hope to their farthest flights.

The joy of the vision.—Being sure of this, no man could ask anything further. One might be content to depart in peace, knowing that the supreme purpose of God was now assured of final fulfilment. No foe could stop the victorious march of the triumphant Redeemer.

CHAPTER VIII

BIRTHDAYS OF NATIONAL LEADERS

In the United States the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln are generally observed; and these create occasions which the church recognizes and which will demand from the preacher, either on the date itself or on the preceding Sunday, an appropriate sermon. Therefore consideration of these particular days is necessary in our study of the church year.

There are two obvious lines of procedure by the preacher: to make the sermon essentially biographical; or to turn the occasion into an opportunity to preach on the significance of leadership in the life of a democratic nation, the values and obligations of patriotism, and the place and influence of the United States in the development of the world.

Following out the first suggestion, the preacher will turn to the biographies of Washington and Lincoln, which are generally available even in small communities. Both these national heroes have been studied and their character and influence evaluated anew within recent years. The material, therefore, is abundant. The preacher may confidently rely upon these sources. To attempt any original study is manifestly impossible. There is abundant room for the use of discrimination and representation, however, as the preacher works over his material for a sermon on this occasion. He will not indulge in mere eulogy. To rehearse the principal facts and to estimate

the character of Washington and Lincoln is not useless. The memory of the congregation needs to be refreshed on these matters. General knowledge is less accurate than might be supposed. Especially timely is a preacher's endeavor to bring the example of these two great Americans before the young people. Each was essentially religious, and the simple outline of the faith of Washington and Lincoln is timely on their birthday anniversaries.

Another profitable line of discussion is the place of personal leadership in the development of the nation which is making the most significant experiment with the ideals of democracy that ever has been undertaken. No civilization is more permanent, prosperous, and happy than the ideals and institutions that undergird and guarantee it, and these institutions depend essentially upon the quality of their personal leaders. The supreme problem of civilization today is to secure the personal control and direction of those mighty energies and agencies that have been called into being especially during the past fifty years. The study of the spirit and activities of the great leaders of the past is a revealing and rewarding way in which to lay before the families of the congregation the high demands of the nation upon the boys and girls who are growing up in our homes today. The home, the church, and the school are the three working partners in the colossal task of furnishing the leaders for tomorrow.

Another method of approach to the sermon on the birthdays of national leaders is to discuss the world-obligations of the United States in these days of post-war confusion and hesitation. This may possibly be considered more appropriately on the Sunday nearest the

Fourth of July, and therefore the suggestions concerning it are deferred to our consideration of this occasion (see ch. xvii).

Among the many subjects appropriate to the sermon on the birthdays of national leaders are the following:

LEADERSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

For that the leaders took the lead in Israel,
For that the people offered themselves willingly,
Bless ye Jehovah.

—Judg. 5:2.

The conditions of a growing and happy state are reflected here. The principle involved is valid in all times.

The people volunteered willingly. In a democracy no permanent advance can be registered that is higher than the level of the popular life and ideal. To be guaranteed, any public policy must have the majority of the people behind it. Legislation reflects the common judgment and must have its sanction for enforcement.

The leaders assumed responsibility. The danger in a democracy is that the people will remain an ineffective mob because they lack direction and control. Someone must interpret the popular will and lead in practical programs for its realization.

Seek practical applications of this principle in community and national life.

BEGINNING THE BATTLE

Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? And he answered, Thou.
—I Kings 20:14.

A battle is on. The right and the wrong are engaged in conflict. The Kingdom of Christ and the reign of evil are in mortal combat. The world is not a place where the issues are

nicely balanced and men may be indifferent. The right must be fought for.

Someone must take the leadership and begin the battle for righteousness. The issues hang on the readiness of those who see the truth to come to its defense.

Who must begin the battle for truth? It is easy to look around and estimate the responsibility of others. But that is not the manly attitude.

You must begin the battle. Washington and Lincoln saw the need of leadership, and they laid aside ease and safety and took up the task. The modern world needs the same high-spirited leadership.

THE LEADER'S PLACE

And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.—Neh. 4:18.

The walls of Jerusalem were being built. The great task called for construction and defense at the same time. This made the task of leadership doubly necessary and difficult.

Nehemiah was the head of the enterprise. He had taken upon himself responsibility for the direction of the work. There must be one responsible head of every great enterprise. The success or failure of it will depend largely upon his personality.

Associated with him were his assistants. He could not attend to all the details. There must be those who would sound the alarm whenever danger came near. Division of labor and responsibility were necessary.

Organized leadership and popular responsibility assured the success of the great work. It demanded that some duties should be assumed and that some privileges should be surrendered. Individualism must be yielded up for the common good.

What bearing have these principles on the problems of life in America today?

COST OF CIVIC FAILURE

Curse ye Meroz . . . . because they came not to the help of Jehovah . . . . against the mighty.—Judg. 5:23.

Meroz was a village or community that failed to give practical help to Jehovah's cause in a time of great need.

God's cause required help.—This is always true. Truth is involved in a struggle with error. Justice is contending with cruelty and injustice. Honor and dishonor are ceaselessly in conflict. The battle is long and fierce. Victory does not come by magic; it is the issue of the conflict, where the stronger force prevails.

Meroz had help to give.—Perhaps it was the community's fair quota of soldiers. Possibly it was the arrest and delivery of the fugitive Sisera. In any event, the duty was not discharged, and so the needed help that ought to have been rendered was not forthcoming.

The failure to give help was practically assisting the enemy.—Meroz did not openly side with the enemy. Its action was *negative.* The sin was one of omission. But this amounted to a practical alignment of the recreant village with the enemy. What we fail to do is sometimes quite as serious in its consequences as what we actually do.

The failure of Meroz involved a curse.—This is harsh treatment. But the fault involved such discipline. It was a betrayal of trust. The possession of resources involves responsibility for their use; and Meroz did not use the energies that God had given the people. The curse was deserved; it was inevitable; it was terrible.

CHAPTER IX

LENT

The annual season of Lent is now observed to an increasing extent among the non-liturgical churches, and it seems reasonable to anticipate a still further extension of the practice. The Puritan protest, made violently at the beginning, against the abuses of formalism, and which, like all reform movements, was too radical and violent, has spent itself; and the reaction to a calmer and better mind is now widely felt in the communions which still share the Puritan tradition. This is in every way wise and profitable and should continue until the religious values lying in the forty days of Lent are fully appropriated. Beginning with Ash Wednesday and closing with Easter, this period in the Christian year furnishes one of the best opportunities to turn the attention of the community to the place and power of religion in individual and social life.

Broadly considered, the preparation of the sermons for this period may begin profitably in the preacher's review of the meaning of these forty days of particular observance of private and public devotion in the experience of the Christian people. Lent was not imposed upon them by external authority; it grew out of their own needs and experience as they sought to realize in daily life their union with Christ in the Christian way of living. They found that it was necessary and profitable to set aside a certain period of the year for acts of devotion, consisting

of self-denial, focused attention on religious truth, and communion with God, for the upbuilding and enrichment of their Christian faith and conduct. They knew that all time is holy and that there are no magical values in particular occasions or festivals; but, just as there is worth in the particular observance of especial days for the culture of patriotism or any of the major interests of life, so religious experience derives profit and power from thought and devotion concentrated during days set apart to this particular purpose. The preacher who has oriented himself with new accuracy in the record of this development will be the better prepared to preach profitably during the season of Lent.

The surest way to insure the largest profit to the community from the Lenten season is to make a careful plan for the use of each day as it occurs. In this way, adequate preparation will be guaranteed and the people will anticipate the entire season with keen expectation.

The following preaching project has been based on the supposition that there may be seven occasions on which a Lenten sermon will be required between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Therefore the maximum number of texts and subjects are proposed. The significance of Palm Sunday and Easter demands more extended consideration, and sermons appropriate to both days are included in the following plan.

PROGRAM OF PREACHING DURING LENT

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. If a sermon is called for on this occasion, it may profitably be concerned with the general subject of acts of devotion, the value of

religious meditation, and especially with the place and profit of self-denial in the development of spiritual insight and the culture of the higher powers of personality. Suggestions on this matter have been made in chapter vi, and nothing further will be added here.

SEVEN SERMONS FOR SUNDAY MORNINGS IN LENT

First, we suggest a plan for sermons at the services held on Sunday morning. The texts are all taken from the gospel according to St. Luke, and the sermons present major aspects of the experience and teaching of Jesus which seem to possess a certain coherence and to move onward toward a climax at Easter. The following order is proposed:

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.—Luke 2:12.

This is the first note in the great good news which the Christian church brings to the world. The technical name for it is the "Incarnation." God expressed his nature in a human life in order that we might come to know him.

The Father God must unveil himself to his children.—This is an essential factor in the whole thought of fatherhood. In so far as he can make his nature and purpose known, a human father will reveal these to his children. He will not issue commands or exact obedience after the manner of a despot. A true father deals with his children as rational and loving, and he knows that the way in which his will becomes the law of the family life will depend essentially upon the manner in which his purpose and character are understood by the children.

In seeking to unveil himself the Father will use the means which are most easily understood by his children.—There will be many of these agencies used. Nature, history, one's own experience, the religious consciousness of others, are among the media through which God reveals his nature to his children. But the one most varied, beautiful, and easily understood medium which all men can lay hold on is a human life, passing through all the experiences of the "average" man, but also achieving the highest of which we know our nature to be capable. The whole range of human experiences—birth, growth, work, friendship, loyalty to a cause, and death itself—must be factors in a human life that will reveal God.

The personality of Jesus is this perfect medium for the Father's revelation of himself.—That which is the presumption becomes the fact: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." And Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The human life of Jesus began with his birth, included his physical death, and is now being completed in his living relations with all who trust and follow him. In Jesus we see and know all that we need to understand concerning God as our heavenly Father. If the life of God were to appear on earth in a human form, we can conceive of no respect in which the self-revelation would be essentially different from that which we know in the life and character of Jesus Christ.

THE MASTER OF LIFE

And all the multitude sought to touch him; for power came forth from him, and healed them all.—Luke 6:19.

The character of Jesus is manifest in many phases; here he appears as a man of power; this power worked for the benefit of all, and the result of it was the authority

that he exercised over the crowds that gathered around him.

The power of Jesus.—By "power" we mean the Master's ability to achieve the ends which his own nature set before him, which, in his case, were the noblest possible. Every person must define the objectives of his own life; these will be determined by the ideals which the person actually cherishes; they ought to be the highest aims possible. Then we must somehow find the energies that will enable us to reach the objectives that we have thus defined. This makes us persons of power. Christ is the supreme Giver of the energy that enables us to gain our objectives. True power is therefore Christ's gift.

Christian power is always exerted for the common good.—When power is used for private or selfish ends, we have the tyrant or despot. The most flagrant abuse of power is to expend it for the possessor's own advantage. The modern world everywhere needs help and guidance. It is unwise, wrong, and lost. Men of power must teach, guide, and save the world. The power to do this comes from Christ. He is the Savior of the individual and of all the social groups as well. The noblest exercise of power by the individual is for social salvation.

Social ministry in Christ's name wins the people.—The followers of Jesus may not be able to exercise their power in the same way that the Master did; but they may exert it for the same ends. When they do this, the people know it and are won to the Master. Deeds of week-day helpfulness, as well as prayer and praise, give convincing testimony to the reality of Christ's love and power. The people may not understand our creeds, but they never will mistake the meaning of our Christ-like deeds. The churches that most fully repeat the saving service of Jesus will have the greatest influence in the community.

THREE CONDITIONS OF DISCIPLESHIP

And he said unto all, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.—Luke 9:23.

Jesus has told his friends what the end of his earthly life is to be; now he tells all who hear him what the conditions of discipleship are.

Self-sacrifice.—Notice always that selfhood must be achieved before it can be surrendered. Just as a pauper cannot make a gift to a benevolent cause, so one cannot sacrifice for Christ's cause something which he has not already gained for Christ's sake. So the duty of self-realization always precedes the duty of self-sacrifice. The progress of the Kingdom of God always has been conditioned on the surrender to it of gifts possessed by its members. Just as the soldier must lay down his powers and the patriot his possessions for his country, the Christian must sacrifice his powers for Christ. Self-sacrifice is still the supreme energy in Christ's cause.

Cross-bearing.—The people in Christ's time understood this condition: the man condemned to crucifixion bore his own cross to the place of execution. The meaning is: every daily duty, whatever sacrifice it involves, must be accepted and borne in cheerful loyalty to Christ. The modern Christian is not called to suffer martyrdom or to die for Christ; he is called to live a useful, brave, and happy life for Christ, accepting hardship courageously and meeting difficulties bravely for the Master's sake.

Obedience.—This is the meaning of "following" Christ. The Christian life begins, progresses, and ends in habitual obedience to the will of God as it is revealed in the commands of Christ. Obedience is the supreme Christian test of love and loyalty. We may be reluctant to yield our wills to Christ, but there is no escape from the conditions. They are constant and utterly imperative. That which Jesus tells us to do in the

Sermon on the Mount, for example, we must do. He commanded us to love, to forgive, to help, to follow him. This is the law of the Christian life, never repealed. This is the service which is perfect freedom.

STEWARDS OF GOD'S GIFTS

And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.—Luke 12:15.

Jesus refused to enter into the decisions of practical issues or to inaugurate definite programs; he dealt in those deep, underlying principles which issue in programs and finally inevitably decide controversies.

Bondage to abundance of things.—This is everywhere the peril of our modern life. We are seeking to pile up things: we want more houses, more automobiles, more comforts. A neighbor extends his property; we must extend ours. A friend spends money freely; we must spend yet more freely. So the vicious circle enlarges. Finally there are no limits to the reach of our desires, and our whole life is literally cluttered up with things. Many a man's life resembles an old attic; it is a lumber-room of outgrown or outworn possessions.

The peril of covetousness.—Envy is one of the overlooked enemies of the human spirit. The old commandment is valid: we must not covet. Consider the practical issues of covetousness:

Upon ourselves. Envy instantly intensifies selfishness. We want what we want for our own advantage. The ego intrudes to the center of the stage. The covetous man interprets every action in reference to himself, what it will bring him in the way of profit, promotion, or pleasure. So he loses the right scale of values, and his whole world is thrown out of harmony. He is standing the pyramid upon its apex.

Upon others. It makes them the object of our grasping

desire rather than of our unselfish love. It seeks to get profit from others rather than to be profitable toward them. It is one of the most disagreeable of faults, for it thrusts a single person constantly into the center of attention and in the end makes that person disagreeable in every situation. It tends to breed envy in others, and perverts the best in human action.

THE JOY OF RESCUE

Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.—Luke 15:6.

A picture of simple village life in Palestine, where a shepherd gives a feast to his neighbors because he has rescued a lost sheep. This illustrates the social joy of rescue, seen and felt especially among Christians.

The life in peril.—The lost sheep stands for a fact in our everyday experience. There are so many dangers! We are in peril ourselves; so are our comrades. We are missing the mark; to miss the mark is to sin. We are wandering from the right path; that means to miss the supreme objective of life. In all these situations of peril we need help.

The fact of rescue by sacrifice.—The lost sheep was recovered only at the cost of the shepherd's sacrifice. He was obliged to face a danger and to put his own safety in hazard. This is the only way in which it is possible to get relief in the deadly danger of imperiled life. One must sacrifice for another.

The joy of recovery.—The joy of rescue is deeper than that which comes from first possession. Something personal has been added to it; the sacrifice involved has by so much enhanced the worth of that which has been rescued. The happiness of the one who is saved floods back upon him who has wrought the rescue, to deepen the stream of his joy. Thus the unselfish happiness of rescue is deeper than all possible joy in possession.

The social meaning of this joy.—The shepherd called in his friends and neighbors to the feast of rejoicing because he could not possibly keep a social happiness to himself or enjoy it alone. It was a matter of importance to the owner, but also to the whole neighborhood, that the sheep had been saved. The loss of life, in any degree or by any means, is a social concern; the whole community suffers whenever any member suffers. Therefore the joy of rescue is social.

THE SINGING STONES

I tell you that, if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out. —Luke 19:40.

This somewhat obscure saying of Jesus seems to indicate that in time his supremacy will be universally acknowledged, for the very stones would attest it if men were to keep silent. The universal conquest of Jesus is indicated by the text.

The intellectual supremacy of Jesus.—Not, of course, in the sphere of philosophy or pure thinking. Nor in science and academic research. Yet it is true that Jesus commands to a wonderful degree the most profound thought about the meaning of life. Nothing surpasses his insight into the actual meaning of the world. He knew what life means, and he set this meaning forth with wonderful clearness in his simple teaching. The wisest man cannot go beyond Jesus as an interpreter of life.

The moral supremacy of Jesus.—In the sphere of the moral life Jesus is without a peer for his discrimination and teaching. He never failed to discern moral values. He was not bewildered as to the details of right conduct that perplexed other teachers. He reduced moral action to fundamental motives; thus he simplified and clarified the whole life of man. When we crave moral certainty, we go to Jesus and are never disappointed.

The spiritual supremacy of Jesus.—The real supremacy of Jesus appears in the relations of the spirit, however. Here he speaks as one having absolute authority. He discovers what is true and abiding; he goes beneath the surface to that which is creative. So Jesus becomes the Master of the human spirit. Our real life is not determined by the things we possess but by the ideals that guide us and the purposes that control us. Whoever, therefore, can define these with clearness and illustrate them in action becomes thereby our spiritual master. Whenever he is given clear right of way, Jesus never fails to do this for individuals or communities.

A FRUITLESS AND A SUCCESSFUL QUEST

Why seek ye the living among the dead?—Luke 24:5.

Where shall we seek for the springs of the highest joy and the sources of the noblest living?

Not in mere physical joys but in Christian purposes.—The danger of trying to satisfy deathless yearnings with earthly satisfactions! Wealth, pleasure, and temporal power are all good when they are honestly gained and rightly used; but they cannot give permanent satisfaction to the growing human spirit. It is like trying to satisfy a successful railway superintendent with toy trains.

Not in failing teachers but in the unfailing Christ.—There are many claimants upon our loyalty as teachers and examples. Great men have ennobled the race and claim our devotion: Socrates, Paul, Luther, Milton, Lincoln, are a few among many names. Each has his throne, and each rules a part of life. But the one Ruler above them all is Christ, who never failed perfectly to illustrate the truth he taught by his own example. As the moral and spiritual Master, Jesus Christ is supreme.

Not in a record of Jesus but in the living Christ.—There is always a painful tendency to go back to a record of Jesus

and to seek to conform our conduct and character to his example. But the central fact in the Christian religion is that Christ is living now, unseen but real, actually able to make contacts with us, to reproduce his motives in ours. We do not follow a dead man as an example; we are swayed in our daily life by a living Person, "Whom, not having seen, we love." We can feel Christ, choose him, follow him, not an abstract principle or a cold law, but a warm personal Lord of our daily life.

SEVEN SERMONS FOR SUNDAY EVENINGS IN LENT

Still centering our thought on the life and message of Jesus, we may organize the evening services of the Lenten season around the somewhat external phases of the Great Life according to the following plan:

THE GREAT CALL

I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.—Luke 5:32.

The mission of Jesus as stated in his own words. This mission becomes the specific mission of every Christian and therefore defines our duty today.

Not to those who have no need or claim.—The truly righteous or those who are sufficiently strong do not need the saving ministry of Christ or his church today. Apply this principle to the work of the modern church. How much of its activity is directed to those who are not supremely in need of its ministry. Many churches have left the needy fields to the care of social settlements and have gone to the sections of the city where already many Christian agencies are at work and with which they are forced to compete. Compare the budgets for foreign work with those of home expenses. Note the strategy of the Salvation Army.

To those who are needy and claim our help.—The greatest need of the world today is emancipation from the power of hate and sin and envy. There is desperate need of economic help; but the call for moral and spiritual help is greater still. Repentance means a complete reversal of ruling motives; it is not merely sorrow for sin; it is not simply to cease from sinning; it is to act so truly and constantly from the motive of love that the entire direction of life will be changed. Christ and his church today are commissioned to this supreme business. They must tell the world that there is a better life possible for the individual and for society; they must furnish the power to realize this life; they must ally their energies with all persons and groups who are striving to realize this life in themselves. This is the great call and crusade of the modern day, which perpetuates the mission and message of Jesus in the past.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS GOOD NEWS

And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the Kingdom of God, and with him the twelve.—Luke 8:1.

The Christian message is still good news, and is to be carried to the ends of the earth by the followers of Jesus.

The range of the message.—Its universal character is apparent from this text. As far as Jesus himself was concerned, he comprehended all the places he could reach within the sphere of his activity. And his great command to his disciples embraced the ends of the earth. Whatever limits may be imposed upon other religions, the Christian faith is universal. It is to be satisfied with nothing less than the conquest of all human life. The universe itself is embraced in the Christian ideal of the Kingdom of God.

The variety of its publication.—Note the two words translated "preaching" and "bringing." The former means to pro-

claim as a herald, and the second to announce as a messenger. This means that the news of the Kingdom is to be made known in different ways. The act of publishing the gospel as good news calls for many agents and methods. The press, the school, the pulpit, all are united in a partnership of publicity to make known to all the world the good news of the new life in Christ. The preacher is not the only one whose work contributes to the great work of evangelization; every act that in any way makes the gospel known is a necessary agent in the world's evangelization.

The partners in the enterprise.—The evangelization of the world is a social activity. Christ could not do it alone; he needed the Twelve to be with him and share his labor and love. They could not do it alone. They needed Jesus in their midst. It was only by the division of labor and the delegation of responsibility that the work could be done. So the final evangelization of the world will be wrought by the living Christ in joint labor with those who love and follow him.

ASKING FOR GREAT GIFTS

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. —Luke 11:9, 10.

A repeated promise of success to all who ask, who seek, and who knock, desiring the supreme gifts of life.

The asking soul.—Every human father is happy to have his child ask him for what he desires. He knows that even the best-intentioned child will ask sometimes for that which he ought not to receive; but in so far as his resources will permit and the request is right, a father answers favorably the petitions of his children. In the case of spiritual gifts the same law obtains. God wants his children to ask for spiritual blessings; and he gives them. It may not be when

we expect, or in the way we desire; but the right gift finally comes.

The seeking soul.—This adds the idea of urgency to the thought of asking. The explorer seeks the object toward which he has set out. The research of the laboratory is a persistent seeking after the general laws that are to be derived from a study of the facts. So the seeker after truth is one who goes steadily ahead in a line of movement or inquiry and resolutely demands the results or achievements which he desires.

The demanding soul.—We think of Holman Hunt's great picture, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." It represents the insistent demand of love which will not take a negative answer. In the same way we are bidden to bring our needs to God, beating at a door which will finally be opened in such ways as Love will define. God gives the gift when the time is ripe for its bestowal.

STEADFAST ACTION

Go and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I am perfected. Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.—Luke 13:32, 33.

Here we see an example of the courageous and steadfast action of Jesus in the presence of every form of opposition.

The progress of love.—Jesus defines the situation with fearless clarity. Today he must work; tomorrow he must keep on working; and the end is clear and inevitable; death is involved in fidelity to his principles and program. But this is the only way in which love can finally triumph. It must be patient to achieve its great result gradually. It cannot gain its objective in a single day. Death may be involved in final success. But the progress must be kept up until victory is achieved.

Triumph through suffering.—The words "I am perfected" are a pleasing form of speech for expressing the fearful fact of death. Jesus knew the price that he must pay for fidelity to his mission and cause. The greatest triumphs come when love is ready to suffer and sacrifice for a definite object. The greatest victories in Christian history have come in this way. St. Paul knew what it meant to fill up the measure of the sufferings of Christ. This is a safe law to trust today, even when we are so likely to rely on physical force and material power.

God's men in the world.—So it may reverently be said that the Christian is God's man in the world, seeking to do what Christ would do if he were in any situation where the Christian finds himself. This conception of life adds tremendous worth and dignity to it. To keep steadily, bravely, and quietly going onward in the way that love and duty point out as the will of God is to find truth, joy, and peace as no other motive can possibly give them.

THE LOFTINESS OF HUMILITY

For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—Luke 18:14.

Jesus was himself the consummate example of the greatness of humility, and his teaching also makes humility a paramount Christian virtue.

The folly of self-exaltation.—All men naturally crave conspicuous positions; and if such a place comes in the course of natural social development, we have the right to accept and enjoy it. But the tendency is to seek such positions instead of waiting for them to seek us. This proposes a wholly unworthy end for living; it brings all the selfish desires into action; it makes one's own honor and praise, rather than the welfare of one's comrades, the goal of living. The result is a

shameful humiliation in the end. The self-seeker finally is always discovered and dishonored.

The wisdom of humility.—We must define humility. It is not mere cringing self-abasement. It is not the habit of Uriah Heep. Dr. Jowett compares it to the way in which the rugs are laid down in a house, producing the sense of comfort and peace necessary to happy home life. So, whenever anyone puts himself into the position of service, in order to bring about the joy and peace of others, he is ennobled in the action and will be exalted by it. No one will seek the place of lowly service in order to be exalted; that would be to defeat the very spirit of humility. He will seek the place in order that he may render the service, with no thought of a reward to come to him in any way from it. He never will be impatient or rebellious if no recognition is given to his humble service. He will keep on doing the work to which he set his hand and know that so long as his life was useful it was all he desired. Long after his earthly life is ended, he may be honored for his lowly labor and unselfish life. In any event, he chose the only true way of right living.

THE FORGIVENESS OF LOVE

And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.—Luke 23:34.

Here Jesus confirms by his action under the most trying conditions his commands to his disciples concerning forgiveness.

The reality and cruelty of pain.—It is difficult to imagine the hideous cruelty and unspeakable pain involved in the crucifixion of a man. Our sensitive spirits do not easily picture the fearful fact of Jesus nailed to the cross. But it was an actual experience. He possessed a body which had never been broken by any vices, and therefore it was able to en-

dure to the last measure of poignancy the physical anguish of the crucifixion. His prayer for the forgiveness of his tormentors came in a moment of intense physical agony.

The possible response of hate and revenge.—Undoubtedly many another victim had cursed and reviled as he suffered intense torture at the hands of the soldiers. The World War revealed anew the terrific power and vocabulary of hatred and reprisals. The old law of "an eye for an eye" had been repealed by Jesus, and a new commandment given in its stead; but this was the first time when it could be tried in actual life. Jesus uttered no word of hate and called for no revenge to be wrought. He proved that there is a better way.

The forgiveness of suffering love.—Hymns of hate were forever done away at the cross of Christ as a method of dealing with enemies. Here is the final triumph of love that knows how to suffer and forgive. It is the birth of a new day for mankind. The light of it has been breaking but slowly across the world; but it is the true sunlight of love for all the children of God. We are not to retaliate; we must not hate; we are to love and forgive. This is the new law of the Christian to the end of time.

THE SERVANT OF MANY

But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth.—Luke 22:27.

One of the most complete and satisfactory expressions of the master purpose of Jesus: the servant of all is the most useful and noble of all.

A physical example.—Study the sunlight. We derive from its energy the power for all our human activities. It is silent, potent, beautiful, and comes with no demands, to render its service to all. We receive most from it when we put ourselves into right relations to it. It is ceaselessly working for our good, although we seldom recognize the fact. So light becomes the servant of all living beings.

The power and beauty of service.—It involves gracious ministry to the needs of others. It is the gift of self, the greatest gift, to the common life around us. We cannot render the highest service through the agency of someone else; we must invest ourselves personally. Thus real service involves the actual sharing of life; we enter into the experiences of others and share them.

The supreme example in Jesus.—There is no greater example in all human experience of the self-forgetting of a great soul and its full dedication to the welfare of others. Jesus has a stainless record in this regard; his life is clear as a crystal from any effort to promote himself. He sought to help, comfort, and save all those with whom he came in contact.

Exaltation through service.—In the case of Jesus we see the full exaltation of human character through its dedication to the needs of others. He never sought honor, but it has come to him in highest measure. He made himself of no reputation; yet the name of Jesus Christ is undoubtedly held in higher reverence today than that of any other person who ever has lived. In the end the unselfish life is appreciated, and the name of the server of others is loved and remembered. It would pay to be unselfish if one were to seek the rewards of service; but they are never sought; they come in God's good time and way.

SEVEN SERMONS OF WEEK-DAYS DURING LENT

It may be found desirable to emphasize religious services on week days during the Lenten season and to organize the subjects for addresses around a common subject during that time. Either the major teachings or the character of Jesus makes an appropriate subject. Also it is profitable to turn to the essential phases of the Christian

experience. Choosing the former subject, the following texts and titles may be found suggestive:

THE HAPPIEST BIRTHDAY

And many shall rejoice at his birth.—Luke 1:14.

The birthday of Jesus of Nazareth has brought the greatest joy and privilege that ever has come to the human race. It has enriched the following:

Children.—Jesus has been the Lover of children, and his message and spirit have wrought mightily for the welfare of child life. He placed such value on the human person that even the weakest have been under the championship of his teaching and example.

Lowly homes.—The example of Jesus at Bethany and the way in which he honored family life have alike thrown a new joy and dignity over humble homes. Hard work, simple pleasures, and deathless love always have seemed to enjoy the especial sanction of Jesus. See the "Cotter's Saturday Night" as an example.

The neglected and desolate.—Jesus was a wonderful Lover of those whom men overlooked and despised. He brought courage and hope to men and women who were caught in the clutch of hard conditions.

The suffering and sorrowful.—Jesus is the supreme Comforter. In comradeship with him men and women who "labor and are heavy laden" find rest and peace. Jesus has the one great message of hope to give to those who have seen their loved ones leave their side. He stands by every open grave with his message of deathless hope.

The great and the strong.—Jesus is the mighty Master of the world's greatest and strongest leaders. They have felt themselves kept by Christ from the tendency to use their power selfishly. They have been made more responsive to

human need in every form. They have interpreted their lives in the terms of service. They have leaped over the barriers of race and class more bravely. All this the imperial and commanding Christ has given them.

THE GRACIOUS TEACHER

And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son?—Luke 4:22.

What are some of the gracious words of the Great Teacher?

Words concerning God.—He never attempted to give a definition of God. Instead, he described God as the Father. This is so easy to understand, so clarifying, so attractive! All that was good and kind and beautiful in our parents is of the very nature of God. So the Father God becomes near and good, caring for us and pardoning us.

Words concerning man.—Jesus never attempted to explain or to define human nature. We know what he thought about his fellow-men by the way he treated them. They, also, were the children of God and therefore worthy of respect and service. Even in a dying thief, Jesus could discover a comrade in the life eternal. Little children loved and trusted him because he saw in them the character that alone could understand and inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Rich and poor alike commanded the respect of Jesus.

Words concerning life and duty.—Jesus had one simple formula to explain the meaning and the aim of human life: it was a practical endeavor to make the will of God prevail. This is no vague term. We know what perfect Love and Wisdom would desire for the object of its affection. It would be goodness, joy, peace, love, and strength. This, then, is what we are to seek for ourselves and for others.

Words concerning immortality.—For centuries men have pinned their faith to the great affirmation: "I am the resurrection and the life." These words have been spoken times without number beside open graves. "Because I live, ye shall live also." This is the promise of a Master who proved himself the final Victor over death. In the light of these affirmations, our fears flee like mists before the morning sun.

THE GREATNESS OF THE KINGDOM

I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there is none greater than John: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of God is greater than he.—Luke 7:28.

A statement of the privileges of those who become members of the Kingdom of God through union with Christ.

The greatness of John.—He summed up the long line of the prophets who had spoken as God's men to their fellows. His personal life was noble, and confirmed his message. His message was clear and urgent, striking at the roots of individual and social sin and leading men to repentance. His loyalty was conspicuous, leading at last to his death. Thus he was supreme in greatness.

The privileges of the Kingdom of God.—The members of the Kingdom may know God as the prophets never were permitted to do. Since Jesus lived, we know all we need to know about God. He is like Jesus, and that is enough to make him adorable. Members of the Kingdom understand the purpose of life. We are here on earth together in order that our lives may serve God's great purpose for the redemption of the world. We are to take our part in the great reconciliation which it is God's will to effect in the world. We know the joys and rewards of service to men in Christ's name. The sharing of life, which is the supreme privilege of living, becomes our possession. We enter into the power to realize

the ideals of the Kingdom as well as to perfect our own Christian character. In some way energy is given to us to achieve the great end of Christian living. We know that the victory is to be ours finally. It may take long years to accomplish this; but sometime, by God's help, we shall arrive at the goal of our endeavor.

THE END OF EVIL

And he said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.—Luke 10:18.

As we observe the presence and the fearful results of sin at work in human life, we must ask, "Will it ever end?" Jesus answers with his vision of Satan fallen from heaven.

There shall be an end to evil.—We cannot tolerate a divided world. One force must finally rule over all life. Permanent dualism is impossible. Sin carries in itself the elements of its own destruction. Our observation of the course of history or of contemporary life furnishes the proof of this proposition. Take intemperance as an example. The habitual poisoning of the body by alcohol reduces its power of resistance and finally brings disaster. In spite of apparent exceptions, this is the general law.

It will come like the lightning at the end of a process.—For a long time the forces of evil run their course, apparently unchecked. Those who yearn for better conditions sometimes say, "How long, O Lord?" But the end is like the gathering of an electrical storm at the close of a heated day, or the bursting of the levées when the flood reaches a certain height. The cataclysm is inevitable; and when it is over and the period of readjustment has passed, we know that there is no escape from the final destruction that issues from evil of every kind.

It will be accomplished by the Christian mission.—However sure the end of evil may be, there are certain forces that ac-

celerate the process. A notable reformer said, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but they make better speed when a sheriff is on their trail." And so the organized forces of Christian righteousness must be constantly alert in order that the speedier end of evil may be brought about. The Christian mission is a moral crusade as well as a spiritual passion. It is militant as well as meditative. The deeper its devotion the stronger is the thrust of its moral motive. The hope of a society morally redeemed lies in the Christian gospel.

YEAST

And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.—Luke 13:20, 21.

A description of the Kingdom of God in terms of a familiar household fact and figure.

The Kingdom of God as a description of the ideal society.—Our minds demand the unity, the worth, and the joy of life. We are not content with a fragmentary conception of the universe. As thinking beings, we are bound to run the lines of our survey through the tangle of the world in which we find ourselves, reducing it to order, finding our place in it, and defining a goal that is worthy of the work of God's hands. The most satisfactory description that ever has been given of this order and final issue of human life is in the words of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This Kingdom is in process of becoming; it is an achievement.

The achievement of the Kingdom of God comes through a vital process, well described by the work of yeast.—It will not come by the establishing of institutions, the passing of laws, the carrying out of programs. The process of fermentation is the result of vital action. Living organisms reproduce; the

inorganic is quickened by the organic; vital energy passes steadily from the living to the non-living. Thus the Kingdom of God is extended among men. One life, with quickening and transforming power, touches another. We gain our visions, our inspirations, and our sustaining energy from comrades in the daily contact of life. Therefore the way in which to advance the Kingdom is not simply to formulate a theory, to call a program into being, to work at schemes; it is to *be* something nobler and braver, which will create the loftier ideal in others. It is to pass along the friendship, the kindling love, the lofty ideal. And finally all life will be changed.

PURIFIED THROUGH OBEDIENCE

And it came to pass, as they went, they were cleansed.—Luke 17: 14.

The lepers were commanded to go to the priests; their purification came in the path of obedience.

The command of Jesus.—Instead of the command of Jesus seeming reasonable or warranted to the lepers, it was impossible to regard it as less than absurd. They wanted to see their flesh come white and clean; and, instead, they were told to go to the priests and, so far as one could see at the moment, attempt to display their ugly sores.

But Jesus knew what was necessary. He was the Commander and they were to obey. Dwell on this phase of the character of Jesus. He comes to modern life with a demand from which there is no appeal. He tells us what we must do; it is our part to obey. "This is my commandment." Thus the general gives his orders.

The test of obedience.—Implicit, immediate obedience is the test of loyalty to Christ and the way into the enjoyment of all his gracious gifts. This is a universal law. The simple matter of learning how to do anything proves it. The ap-

prentice must obey the hours and rules and the accumulated experience of his task. The same is true in scholarship; the only way in which to master a problem in advanced geometry is to have obeyed the law of thorough mastery in the preceding propositions.

Cleansed in the way of duty.—No miracle was performed under startling and challenging circumstances. This was surely disappointing to anyone who was eagerly expecting the startling and dramatic. The change in their outward flesh came as they walked obediently under the impulse of inner faith and did what Jesus told them to do. It is in the common way of duty, doing the day's work well, that we have the right to expect the satisfaction of our deepest yearnings.

SIFTED TO SERVE AND SAVE

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not; and do thou, when once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren. —Luke 22:31, 32.

Avoiding all discussion of the relation of Satan and Christ in the passage, we note here the great principle that spiritual discipline is aided by Christ for the purpose of preparing those who have passed through it to be the servants and helpers of others as a result of their experience.

The sifting of the wheat.—It is the very privilege of the wheat to be sifted, in order that all the refuse matter may be blown away and the pure kernels thus prepared for use and for seed. This is a symbol of the way in which the finest Christian character is wrought out under the severe discipline of temptation and strain. Just as the strongest oak tree grows where it may be whipped by the varying winds that blow from every quarter, so the sturdiest Christian character is

never produced in safe isolation but in the midst of the moral and spiritual stresses of life.

Jesus the intercessor.—Jesus does not pray that his friends may be taken out of the world or that they may not be subjected to tests. He leaves his loyal disciples to meet the full trial of life; but he promises that he will pray that their faith shall not fail. Are we justified in relying upon the intercession of the living Christ to help us in our struggles? If we accept his promises, we may do so. We know that millions of our human comrades in the past have thus relied upon them and that they have not been left without help. We know that when we cast ourselves upon this promise in any experience of trial we receive help in ways that we cannot explain. So the answer is, "Yes."

The issue of successful sifting.—Those who have passed through an experience are the best prepared to help others through a similar trial. They understand because they have met the same problems and have received the same help. The result of any great experience of discipline is to prepare us to stand by others when they are in the same emergency. It would be cowardly and unsocial for anyone to pass through a trial and then remain unsympathetic toward others who must meet something similar. Christ depends upon the co-operation of those who have suffered and conquered in the common task of helping others to victory. Therefore no spiritual conquest is purely individual in its issues.

PALM SUNDAY

Palm Sunday stands at the beginnings of Holy Week, with its message of triumph and hope. It is to be interpreted, inevitably, in the light of the days that followed it with tragic swiftness; but it is a day of victory. All preaching ought to be hopeful and confident; but especial-

ly on Palm Sunday this note is consistent; nothing else would fit the occasion.

There are at least two ways in which to handle the sermon on Palm Sunday. One is to treat the history itself graphically; to describe the events, to show how they had their place in the experience and mission of Jesus, to make them a vital and blessed part in the life of our Lord. In order to do this a preacher must take every means at hand to quicken his imagination until he will appreciate and interpret the occasion. He must study pictures, read descriptions, and think over the details of the day's doing until they will actually move before his mind. Then the scene will live in the sermon.

The other method of treatment is to open up the spiritual truths that flow naturally from the experiences of Palm Sunday as the preacher seeks to interpret its spiritual value for all mankind. Palm Sunday stands for the note of triumph and the fact of final victory in the experience of the Christian individual and in the history of the Christian church. This seldom appears fully at any particular moment; it is a truth which rests upon the assurance of the promises of God.

Therefore, on Palm Sunday the preacher may bring to the congregation the grounds of their confidence in the final conquest of adversity and sin. He may reveal the difference between real and apparent victories in individual struggle and community life. On this matter the congregation is eager for assurance, for sometimes it looks indeed as if it were a case of

> Truth forever on the scaffold,
> Wrong forever on the throne;

and the preacher must assure the people that

> Behind the dim unknown,
> Standeth God within the shadow,
> Keeping watch above his own.

This is the time to define the Christian in the words of Robert Browning, as

> One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
> Never doubted clouds would break,
> Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
> Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better, sleep to wake.

There is an eager wistfulness today on the part of men and women who are sorely beset in the struggle of life, to know beyond any doubt whether or not they may be confident of the final victory of truth and goodness and love. They know that the people who acclaimed Jesus a conqueror were soon shouting, "Crucify him." But they must also be told that the symbol of shame has been exalted into the sign emblazoned on the white banners of the militant hosts of righteousness and love.

The optimism of the Palm Sunday sermon must be discriminating and accurate. It is easy to cry "Peace" when there is no peace. We have to reckon with the reality of the struggle, the strength of the enemy, the long years of the conflict, and the possibility that we who strive may never share the full victory. When all this has been fully faced and freely said, the great assurance is yet to be published. This is the preacher's privilege on Palm Sunday.

The following are brief suggestions for the sermon on the day of victory:

MORE THAN CONQUERORS

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.—Rom. 8:37.

The Christian life is one of final victory. In spite of occasional defeats and discouragements, the Christian is a conqueror. Christ enables us to win.

The victory over sin.—Not merely forgiveness for sin, but actual power over the tendency to sin. Christ transforms the soul in its dominant desires.

The victory over doubt.—Christ clears up the gloomy uncertainties as to what life means, both here and after death. True faith is Christian trust.

The victory over hate.—Jealousy and scorn cut to the heart of life. Through Christ we enter the realm of good will and love, where men do each other good and not evil all the days of their lives.

The victory over the fear of death.—Death is no longer an object of dread to a Christian. He knows that the spirit is immortal, and so he is ready to meet the end of his earthly life in the certainty that it marks only the beginning of his larger and better life with the Father.

HOSANNA

Hosanna in the highest.—Matt. 21:9.

Describe the scene. Picture the acclamation. The word means, "Save, we pray." It is the beginning of the acclaim which must be rendered to the world's Savior.

Humanity's supreme need is redemption from sin. Both the effects of sin and sin itself must sometime be removed from the world. To work for this is the greatest task that can inspire us.

Christ is the world's Redeemer from sin. In some way, through faith in him, power comes into us and we are saved.

The fact can be proved by millions of witnesses. The explanations are many; the truth and the experience are one.

The world needs on this Palm Sunday to call upon its one Savior. There are no devices or programs that man has made which will do for the world what Christ will do if he is given the right of way in modern life. The Victor of the world is the Christ to whom the people cried Hosanna.

THE INEVITABLE MASTER

Behold how ye prevail nothing; lo, the world is gone after him.—John 12:19.

Men oppose the mastership of Christ. His moral and spiritual claims contradict the selfish and wicked programs of men. Therefore, inevitable conflict.

This opposition is finally futile. In the end right must overcome wrong; love must conquer hate. It will take long time and steady struggle; but the final issue is with truth.

The world is slowly following Christ. He was a Teacher from a little town centuries ago; but his perfect word, matched by his perfect life, is conquering the world.

Is Christ your Master? How can you make him so more completely? How can we help our country to follow the inevitable Christ?

EASTER

Easter is the supreme festival of joy in the Christian calendar. Christmas stands for the lowly beginning of the Great Life, but Easter celebrates its coronation. The whole Christian message is assured because of the event which is commemorated by Easter. Therefore it is of paramount importance that the sermon on Easter Sunday should be pitched to the keynote of gladness and triumph.

The sermon may be somewhat cramped in point of

time on account of the music which is appropriate to an Easter service. In view of this limitation, the Easter sermon ought to be most carefully prepared and earnestly delivered. It must be adequate to the sublime theme and the exalted mood of the day. Never trust the hour alone for inspiration, thereby apologizing for any carelessness in the thorough work which must be put into the Easter sermon. The occasion and the subject alike call for the most painstaking diligence.

The appropriate subjects are many, but they may be classified under at least these heads:

The resurrection of Christ.—Naturally a preacher will not indulge in a long defense of the resurrection of Christ at an Easter Sunday service; but it is altogether fitting that he should state some of the chief grounds for the faith which has been held so long, so steadfastly, and with such blessed results by the Christian people. There are many lines of argument that are pertinent and convincing, but the most cogent to the modern mind will probably be the one derived from the restoration of the faith of the apostles. They had given everything up and were scattered in dismay. Then suddenly something took place which is explained on the ground of their utter conviction that their Master was living again. There must have been an adequate cause for the resurrection of their dead faith; the actual resurrection of their living Lord is the only cause that can account for their experience. The resurrection of the faith of the earliest disciples of Jesus was grounded in their confidence in his resurrection. It is unthinkable that so beneficent and permanent a fact as the Christian religion could have been grounded in an illu-

sion. The power that changed the lives of men until it could be said actually to have "turned the world upside down" never could have issued from a common blunder on the part of a few gullible men and women. That there are many difficulties in the resurrection narrative admits of no doubt; but that we are justified in holding it true, as Peter and Paul did, is the most reasonable of positions to take. Avoiding all quibbles, we affirm again on Easter Sunday the truth of the ancient creed, "The third day he rose again from the dead."

The wider discussion of the grounds on which belief in personal immortality rests may also be stated on Easter Sunday; but we are reserving this for discussion when we consider preaching on Memorial Sunday (see chap. xiv).

The practical issues of the Easter faith.—One of the severest criticisms brought against Christians is that, whatever their confessions of faith may contain, respecting personal immortality, when it comes to actual behavior, to the conduct of life, the truth confessed in the creed does not so essentially modify their daily living that we perceive any essential difference between them and those who do not hold the doctrine at all. In other words, this faith is "immortal in our libraries but dead in our lives." If this criticism were justified by the facts, it would be one of the most serious charges ever brought against the Christian creed and its disciples. If we are children of God and heirs of a deathless life, then the whole set of our motives ought to be determined by that fact and our conduct ought to be essentially influenced by it. If this is not so, the failure would be as tragic as is the madness and folly of the son of the father's love who

spends his time in a far country among the vileness of the swine. Therefore it is most appropriate that on Easter Sunday the preacher should show how the great truth commemorated on this day brings new motives, new power, and new joy into the daily life of those who accept it. There are reserve energies waiting to be released in the realm of our common work and daily experiences, as the body of Jesus was released from the fetters of death. The Easter sermon ought to be one of the most "practical" discourses of the year. We all need help to live as children of the life eternal, and the Christian preacher has the privilege of bringing this to his congregation on this high day of the year.

The following are suggested texts and subjects:

OUR LIVING LORD

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.—II Tim. 2:8.

Paul is trying to bring the reality of Christ to the mind and memory of his friends; so he puts in the foreground the fact that Jesus rose from the dead.

Study the effect of this faith upon the convictions of the disciples. See it change them into a group of men and women fired by an assurance for which they were willing to sacrifice their lives.

Study how they preached this as the central fact in their faith. They were sure that Jesus was living in a different way from that in which anyone else lived.

Study the way in which conscious loyalty to a living Lord transformed their own lives. Paul is an example. The change that came to pass in him was typical.

Study the testimony of millions of Christians since the days of the apostles who affirm that they are sure that Christ

lives and that they have relations with him in the life of the spirit.

All this evidence converges to establish the fact that Jesus is still the living Master of souls.

THE RISEN LIFE

If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above.—Col. 3:1.

Easter is not merely the resurrection day of Jesus Christ: it stands for the rising of all Christians to new life on higher levels in union with him.

Physical.—Allegiance to Christ and the new life in him bring us into physical soundness and tone, higher than we enjoyed before. It makes us more temperate and happy. We are better insurance risks.

Mental.—Christians are inspired to think more clearly and on higher themes because of their loyalty to Christ. The noblest activities of the human mind have been inspired by Christ.

Emotional.—The deepest, noblest feelings of which the human spirit is capable are called into being as we think about Christ and enter into the world that is created for the soul in union with him.

Moral.—Christ is the creator of the highest moral standards and aims. He furnishes the amplest power to help us attain them. Righteous living in all its best forms is the gift of Christ to the world.

Spiritual.—The Christian is most keenly conscious of God, of the soul, of immortality. The reality of the spirit cannot be doubted by any true disciple of the living, spiritual Christ.

Easter bids us enter into the highest realm of desire and achievement. It assures us that we shall have the power given us to reach still nobler levels of attainment.

EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY IMAGES

As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.—I Cor. 15:49.

Many ancient readings warrant the translation, *let us also bear the image of the heavenly*. Thus the text is both a promise and an exhortation. We regard it as both an assurance and a command.

It is like the seed and the living plant that grows out of it. The beginnings of the heavenly life are wrapped up in the earthly. The old must die in order that the new may find life.

The material body fits the needs of the spirit while it is living in the physical and meeting the strains of this temporal situation. The spiritual body will fit the needs of the soul that is free from the conditions of physical living.

The physical body is the instrument of the soul to do its human tasks; it is a house, a garment, an agent. So there will be another body for the spirit when it is free from earth, and by means of it the spirit will still do the will of God.

Always it is the spirit that is supreme, and we must keep it in control of the body. Then it will be ready for the new and glorious body which will be its possession after death.

The following is an appropriate quotation:

A reasonable person does not build a violin, with infinite labor gathering the materials and shaping the body of it, until upon it he can play the compositions of the masters, and then in a whim of chance caprice smash it into bits. Yet just this the universe seems to be doing if immortality is false.[1]

NEWNESS OF LIFE

Like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.—Rom. 6:4.

Interpret this text by the study of the words "like as" and "so."

[1] Fosdick, *The Assurance of Immortality*, p. 13.

How was Christ raised through the glory of the Father?

Out of weakness into strength. He had only a human body and a mortal life before Easter; after it he had power and eternal years for the accomplishment of his purposes. So we may rise into new strength in Christ.

Out of sacrifice into the rewards of sacrifice. His whole life was spent in the lavish gift of himself to others; after Easter he began to see the rewards of his labor. He had thousands of loyal followers and defenders within a generation.

Out of an earthly life into a spiritual life. He lived bravely and well on earth; but he had to contend with the conditions of humanity. After Easter he was in full possession of his spiritual powers. Easter ought to give us new spiritual possessions and powers.

CHAPTER X

CONFIRMATION AND DECISION DAYS

Confirmation is a rite which is regarded in various ways by the different Christian communions. In the Greek and Roman Catholic churches it is considered as a sacrament, through which the gift of the Holy Spirit, received at baptism, is completed, and strength is furnished for the Christian warfare. In the Lutheran and Anglican churches it is the rite by which baptized persons are received into full communion. Confirmation has not properly been used as a term to designate the ceremony of admission to membership in the other Protestant groups. Within recent years, however, following the courses of instruction given in pastor's training classes, especially during Lent, the words "confirmation class" and "confirmation" have been used to a considerable extent. The difference between the sacramental, the Lutheran, and the later loose usage of the words ought to be clearly kept in mind.

In many churches the evangelistic activities of the year, as well as the organization of a religious education program, come to a final expression in a Decision Day, generally on Sunday. We do not argue here either for or against this plan. There are certain advantages in offering, especially to the young people, the opportunity to register a public decision for the Christian life under favorable influences. On the other hand appear the patent dangers of unduly using group influences to secure

individual decisions. Children and young people are especially sensitive to group pressures and often yield to them suddenly without understanding the full meaning of the choices which they make. If these perils are clearly seen, however, there is no valid reason why Decision Day may not wisely be used and great benefits accrue to the church from it.

The sermon on Confirmation or Decision Day will be earnestly evangelistic in type, centering in the claim of Christ upon human love and loyalty, and driving forcefully at the will with the appeal to register an open and whole-hearted decision for Christ as Master and for his teachings as the way of life. Or it may be concerned with the meaning of the Christian life, together with counsels and encouragements designed to safeguard disciples from discouragements and inaccurate estimates of the meaning of their decision.

It is doubtless better that the minister himself, rather than a specialized evangelist, should preach this sermon, for he knows the children and young people, and to him will be committed the necessary upbuilding of their Christian life. On the other hand, the influence of a new voice and personality may serve to arrest attention and lead to Christian decision more effectively than the well-known preacher can.

The general principles of effective evangelistic and confirmatory preaching are too well known to need amplification here. The notes of clearness, directness, and sincerity must never be missing on Decision and Confirmation Day. The preacher is the advocate and pleader, moving with singular and earnest purpose straight to a

favorable decision. The factor of appeal will figure largely in the sermon on these occasions.

The following subjects and texts are appropriate:

CARRYING THROUGH

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end.—I Cor. 1:7, 8.

Among the ideas brought out by the Great War was that of carrying on through to the end. In the Christian struggle for character this is a needed assurance. Christ is the Confirmer of faith and the sure Guarantor of final victory.

By his example.—Jesus undertook the mission of his life, knowing how prolonged and serious the work would be. He never allowed a diversion or obstacle to check his steady progress to the end which he had defined. Success did not stop him; failure did not deter him; even death did not dim his resolute trust in the final triumph of the Kingdom.

By his promises.—Jesus knew how long his followers would be forced to fight and that many of them would be sorely tempted to give up the struggle. Therefore he told them plainly that they must suffer for the Great Cause, adding the promise of final victory, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (Mark 13:13).

By the example of victorious Christians.—Beginning with the first friends of Jesus, we have an unbroken succession of Christians who have confirmed the example and promises of Jesus in their own experience. From St. Paul to Dwight L. Moody the record is continuous and the testimony is uniform. Their faith has not failed; in weakness they have been made strong; apparent defeat has been turned into glorious triumph. They have relied upon an unfailing source of divine power in the emergencies of life, and their trust never has been be-

trayed. This is a ground of assurance that lies like a rock underneath the endeavors of all Christians and is as sure and steadfast today as it was in the ages of persecution and martyrdom.

THE GUEST AT THE DOOR

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.—Rev. 3:20.

The living Christ stands at the door of the soul, seeking our fellowship.

The guest.—He is the most noble and loving Guest who ever came to our door. He is loving and generous, and rich in gifts to bestow freely upon us. He will fill our hearts with joy, our homes with happiness, our communities with peace and good will.

The rap.—It comes quietly but constantly. Every idea of noble living; every enthusiasm for the true, the beautiful, and the good; every yearning for a more complete and holy life, is the sound of the Master's call for the opened door to our loyalty.

The noises that prevent our hearing.—They are many and confusing. The discord of our business, the sound of our feasting, the jangle of our quarrels, the inner voices of our selfishness—all these so absorb our attention that we fail to listen and hear the summons of the Heavenly Guest.

LIMPING SOULS

How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.—I Kings 18:21.

Religion cannot be ignored in life; Christ's claims upon men must be faced with definite decision.

The issue is defined.—There is no indefiniteness or uncertainty in the issue presented by Christ. It takes many forms:

Either love or selfishness. Christ stands for the redemptive and sustaining power of love. Against this is arrayed the sin and selfishness of the world. Between love and hate there can be no compromise. One or the other must control the individual and society.

Either Christ or another Master. Every person yields to a dominant purpose and control. The motives of Jesus, accepted by any person and held steadily at the center of action, are in opposition to their contradictories.

A decision must be made.—When issues are so clear and the results so inevitable, choice between them is imperative Timid and purposeless persons tend to waver and compromise. This is the virtual betrayal of one's own integrity and is essential falsehood to the highest demands of duty. Many attempt to postpone; this is cowardly and unworthy the dignity of freedom. Others attempt in vain to serve two masters.

The nobility of firm decision.—Nothing less than a clear and positive choice places us where we can respect ourselves, vindicate our own freedom, make our influence strongest, and please God by the exercise of our loyalty. The world respects a positive and purposeful decision, even when it is against its lower aims and standards. Limping wills are finally regarded with contempt.

POSSESSING THE LIFE

He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life.—I John 5:12.

Merely to be physically alive is not to live a complete human life; this depends upon the possession or mastery of Christ.

Real living.—An oyster is a living creature, but in the highest sense of the word we do not think of it as living. It has no conscious mastery of its existence and therefore does not live as Plato or Jesus did. Something must be added to

physical existence in order to realize what living truly means. This is so distinct that it may be called *the* life.

Real living is union with Christ.—Those who knew Christ in human relationships found that their whole sense of life's meaning was changed; they discovered a new scale of values. Then they derived from the enthusiasm of their fellowship with him new energy, enabling them to realize those values and attain the standards that he set. They became of greater worth to the community, as they were more far-visioned, dependable, loyal to truth, and inspired to service. The same effects that followed this human relationship were realized when Christ made his continued spiritual impact upon those who loved and followed him as an unseen Master. This has continued until the present moment. The followers of Jesus live the only real life.

What is it to "have" Christ now?—What is it to "have" the most intimate comrade in life, for example, a husband and wife, who promise "to have and to hold" until death shall part them? When they are united in a common purpose, which sustains them in all times and troubles. When they are sympathetic with each other, even in experiences where they do not fully understand one another. When they so unite in unselfish service to a common purpose that they confer and prefer and defer in mutual love and loyalty. This is also to "have" Christ: to become identified with him in understanding, in purpose, in service.

BOWING TO RIMMON

Thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Jehovah. In this thing Jehovah pardon thy servant: when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, Jehovah pardon thy servant in this thing.—II Kings 5:17, 18.

The situation was painfully clear: a choice between a true and false deity, between loyalty and compromise, between

paying the price of duty or avoiding its painful consequences.

Divided loyalties.—The problem was glaringly simple. To be the free and loyal follower of Jehovah was the plain path of duty; but it would cost the courtier's position and might issue in his death. There was a way out: compromise. A bow to Rimmon as a merely formal act could be made up by increased sacrifices to Jehovah, performed in a spirit of true worship. But loyalties never can be divided in this way when truth and error are in conflict. It must be one or the other. There is no possibility of serving two masters by compromise.

The cowardice of compromise.—No self-respecting person can be satisfied with a divided loyalty. We want to be definite in decision and out-and-out in action. We know it is cowardly to pretend allegiance to one cause and serve the other on the sly. Therefore, in the end a single loyalty is the one that satisfies best.

The demand of life.—Our comrades, as well as ourselves, call for uncompromising loyalty to God and truth. Society can do nothing with a man whose convictions it cannot trust. The community has the right to demand that every member shall stand on one side or the other of the great questions which divide it. Where God and love and goodness are on one side and their opposites are on the other, a neutral or wobbly person is a community plague. The temptation to make a bow to Rimmon and compensate by a sacrifice to Jehovah is a fatal mistake and a social crime.

CHAPTER XI

PENTECOST

The three great festivals of the Christian year are Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. The last occurs the fiftieth day after Easter and is also known as "Whitsunday," perhaps because of the custom of wearing white garments on this particular occasion. Originally the word "Pentecost" referred to the entire period of fifty days; later it was used to designate only the last day of the whole period of festival. It is closely connected historically with the Hebrew Feast of Pentecost (Exod. 34:22), a joyous festival, closing the great thanksgiving period.

In the modern church, the observance of Pentecost is conditioned by the doctrinal positions of the various Christian communions. In Germany its popular celebration is indicated by the familiar lines,

> 'Twas Pentecost, the feast of gladness,
> When fields and trees put off their sadness.

Wherever the gift of the Holy Spirit is emphasized as an essential part of Christian experience, the name and the day are both held in high regard. We have Pentecostal churches and hymns. Undoubtedly the emphasis on "life under the highest leadership" and "the Spirit-filled life" ought to be made more strongly than it is in present-day Christian thinking. The empowering of the entire Christian cause would be advanced if greater stress were laid upon this essential religious experience.

The sermon on Pentecost will naturally be concerned

with the event narrated in Acts 2:1–42, the references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament epistles, the statement of the Christian teaching concerning the Holy Spirit, or the imperative necessity that modern life be more completely under the control of the spirit of God.

The following suggestions are offered concerning the sermon on Pentecost Sunday:

THE TONGUES OF FIRE

And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them.—Acts 2:3.

The study of the tongues of fire reveals the following characteristics of the Holy Spirit, as given to men.

Flaming.—It is ardent; no common, ordinary experience. It kindles life, like fire from a central altar. It represents the passion of Christian service.

Vocal.—It stands for the message of the gospel, given in all its positiveness and assurance, embracing the whole life of man. Our words, uttered in clearness and confidence, express our inmost thought and reveal us to others. The Holy Spirit is the power of revelation and assurance.

Individualized.—There was a gift for each one, according to his need, as the tongues distributed themselves and one rested on every member of the group. There was a common source of the light and power; but the individual was endowed with a particular and peculiar gift. Each had his own work to do and his own gift of divine energy with which to do it.

OUR COMFORTER AND TEACHER

But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.—John 14:26.

The Holy Spirit, sent to us by the Father God, is our Comforter and Teacher.

The Comforter.—This is a translation of the word *Paraclete.* It means in the broadest sense one who is called to stand beside us as advocate and helper. We are not strong enough to meet the experiences of life alone; the source of divine aid is the Holy Spirit.

Sent by God.—The Heavenly Father gives his children help through the Holy Spirit. The Comforter is sent for this purpose. In relying upon the Holy Spirit, we are actually leaning upon God. The Spirit is not created out of human need but is called into being by the love of God and sent to man in the midst of his need.

Teachers of truth.—As the teacher takes truth and makes it clear to the pupil, so the Holy Spirit takes spiritual truth and makes it clear, beautiful, and convincing to disciples of Christ. Jesus taught his friends when he lived among them; now the Holy Spirit teaches men by taking the truth as it is found in Christ and making it plain to men.

THE ALTAR FIRE

Quench not the Spirit.—I Thess. 5:19.

The Holy Spirit is the kindling, energizing gift of God, which must not be dampened or extinguished.

The flame.—The worth of fire in human life is self-evident. The discovery of its use and control registers one of the most important forward steps in the development of mankind. So the spiritual wealth of the race was supremely enriched when human personality was endowed with the gift of the Spirit of God. Revelation of truth, definition of the purpose of living, power to achieve ideal ends, inner peace and joy, all came as a result of this divine gift.

Fire misused.—On the hearth and in the furnace, fire is the servant and blessing of man. Escaping control, it destroys the forests, burns homes, sets cities in conflagration. The

analogy is incomplete, but something similar takes place when the gift of the Holy Spirit escapes the wise control of reason and the fitness of passion to purpose. Under such conditions we may question whether the word "holy" is any longer appropriate. The possession of the Holy Spirit brings with it responsibility for its wise and controlled use.

The flame guarded.—Too great caution in the use of the Holy Spirit may quench the flame. Spirit-filled leaders often shatter the conventional proprieties when these stand in the way of initiative and free action. How may we be assured in seeking the right technique in responding to the control of the Holy Spirit? The example of Jesus helps us. He is the perfect illustration of free response matched by inner control. The action of great Christian leaders helps us. They have generally acted without malice and in quick sympathy with others. The art of reverent listening, expecting divine guidance, helps us. Patience is also an aid. Consistent, steadfast action gives us insight and control.

THE INWARD CERTAINTY

Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.—I John 4:13.

The certainty that we are possessed and guided by the Holy Spirit is the inward proof that we are in real union with God.

What matters most?—In a family it is not simply the economic basis, the possession of all the necessities of life according to an approved standard, although this is important; it is not social standing in neighborhood and community, although this is encouraging. It is unity of purpose, common aims, shared ideals, and the effort of each member to realize these. The same law obtains in the spiritual life: union with God in Christ matters most.

Proofs of unity.—These are many. An inward assurance that is discovered as we examine and evaluate our own experience; the proofs that we discern as we live with others in religious relationships; the practical fruits that appear as we "practice the presence of God." The greatest proof is the clear consciousness that we, growing with experience, are mastered and guided by the Holy Spirit. We learn to distinguish and evaluate our inner controls. They become clearer the longer we live and the more fully we respond to the Spirit's impulses.

The precious gift.—The Holy Spirit is a gift from God. We cannot demand or deserve it. In certain respects, however, we can earn it, as a child can earn gifts at home. Among these ways are: eager desire to possess it, which grows out of our sense of need in the experiment of Christian living; our personal desert, which grows out of the wise use we make of the gift day by day; and our appreciation of the value of the gift, as we learn the fuller meaning of its actual use. Thus the love of God in the gift is justified by our response to the Giver.

CHAPTER XII

TRINITY SUNDAY

This is dedicated to the honor of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and is celebrated on the Sunday following Pentecost. It did not become fixed in the calendar of holy days until after the doctrine of the Trinity had become fully established. It is "a festival of faith, of orthodoxy, of a creed," rather than that of an event or a person.

Necessarily, therefore, the importance of Trinity Sunday will depend upon the stress laid upon the doctrine in the minds of the preacher and the congregation. In "orthodox" churches, this day is one of paramount importance, and the sermon on Trinity Sunday is an outstanding factor in the teaching ministry of the pulpit. It is so regarded in the majority of Christian churches; and countless sermons have been preached on this particular day, designed to expound, defend, and honor the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

In a time when the use of the reason is demanded, any appeal to the "ineffable mystery" of the doctrine does not have the weight that it once carried. To affirm that, in the consideration of this doctrine, "reason is dazzled and transcended," carries conviction to only a certain type of mind, leaving the more rationally inclined unconvinced. However, the place that the doctrine has occupied in Christian history is such that it ought to be presented with all possible clearness and force. The

preacher himself will need to review, not only his knowledge of the history of dogma, but also his vivid realization of the records of the spiritual experience of the Christian people; for the "Trinitarian Controversy" is more than the report of heated argument; it is also the record of abiding satisfactions and incentives to the good life which have been found in the Trinitarian conception of God.

At the outset it ought to be made clear that Tritheism (three gods) is not meant by the Christian conception of the One God in three manifestations. As aqueous vapor, water, and ice are three forms in which one material expresses itself, so the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit may be three manifestations of Deity, as set forth in the ancient Trinitarian creeds. The modern conception of the electronic construction of the universe may yet furnish illuminating analogies on this profound matter. As the earth and the moon are composed of the same kind of matter, and yet one can sustain life while the other cannot, owing to the greater mass of the earth enabling it to hold an atmosphere that renders life possible upon it, which the moon with its smaller mass cannot do; so, difference in quantity may finally call forth difference in quality as well. In short, new arguments for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity may be expected to emerge in the modern world which, saving us from tritheism, will validate the Trinitarian position to those who must think in the terms of a scientific age. At the last analysis, the problem is in the field of theology, and the preacher must find his ground there.

Among the classic texts which may be used on Trinity Sunday are these:

THE FORMULA OF CONSECRATION

Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.—Matt. 28:19.

The act of Christian dedication involves an accepted union with God in a threefold relation.

The name equals the person.—The symbol of our individuality is the name which we bear. Our character gives content to our name. In the Orient, name and nature are identical. When a man's character was changed, his name was also changed. For example: Jacob, "the Supplanter," becomes through enriched spiritual experience "Israel," a "Prince of God." Therefore, when one is baptized "into the name," he becomes identified with the person whom the name represents. In baptism we are consecrated to union with God in Christ for spiritual living.

The Christian Trinity.—This is a union with a loving Father, a loving Savior, and a present Spirit of holiness. These are not three gods, but one God recognized in three ways. This makes the conception of God altogether richer than it would be if it were comprehended wholly in the terms of a Creator or First Cause alone. All the richness of a father's love, all the obedience of a true son, all the nearness and help of a present friend and counselor are involved in the Christian Trinity. To demand its full explanation before it is accepted and built into life is as futile as for a child to insist upon explanations of maternal psychology, which is quite beyond his power to understand, before going to sleep in his mother's arms, or accepting eagerly his father's will as a law of happy living.

BENEDICTION

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.—II Cor. 13:14.

The earliest form of Christian benediction has persisted in the churches until the present day as recognizing a Trinity in the Deity.

The gracious Christ.—The conception of the unmerited favor of God toward man in his weakness and sin is a central fact in the gospel. It lies at the heart of all effective proclamations of the message of the church. God's love is manifest in Christ, not because man deserves it, but because divine love leaps over all the bounds of merit and gives freely that which is neither deserved nor earned.

The loving God.—The heart of parenthood is love. This is seen in both the gifts and the discipline of the Father God. Love knows no limits. It is boundless in bestowal, merciful in exercise, patient in expression. When all else seems to fail, the love of God remains. So courage comes in the place of fear; hope succeeds despair; comfort is given to sorrowing hearts.

The Abiding Spirit.—The fellowship of God with men is the very heart of religion. In the Christian experience, the Holy Spirit comes into intimate union with every sincere and dedicated soul. God is in the inner shrine of the heart through the Spirit's presence there. Union with God is more precious and powerful than all physical contacts and material relationships.

CHAPTER XIII

MOTHER'S DAY AND FATHER'S DAY

The custom of observing the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day has now become quite generally established in the churches. The subject has captured the imagination of the people, and the day will probably be even more generally observed as time passes. Flowers are generously used, and the sermon is expected to conform to the character of the service.

Gradually, also, it has been recognized that the father of the family also deserves some recognition, and so Father's Day is now observed quite widely and with growing frequency on a later Sunday. This somewhat tardy recognition of the man's place in the family economy has its aspect of humor, which will be quietly recognized but not referred to.

The same general principles are valid in preparing the sermon for either occasion. Parenthood is an ennobling experience, and the sanctities of family life are one of the trusts committed to the guardianship of the church. The preacher cannot undertake the preparation of his sermon for either or both of these occasions without a sense of joy, not only on account of his personal love for his parents, but because of the intimate way in which the subject touches the life of the parish. A mother's love and care for her children is one of the most beautiful themes for expression in a sermon. A father's strength and wisdom, given in tireless sacrifice for the welfare of his

family, is one of the noblest earthly symbols for the relation of the Father God to his human children. Abundant materials are at hand for the discourse; the mood of the day is inspiring; the preacher can throw himself into the preparation of his sermon with zeal and confidence.

It seems almost ungracious to call attention to certain problems and dangers that are necessarily involved in preaching on Mother's or Father's Sunday. The first and most obvious of these is that, in seeking to avail himself of the profound and beautiful sentiment connected with the occasion, the preacher may become merely sentimental. In the current language, it is easy to employ the "sob stuff." Sometimes a preacher yields to the temptation to provoke, by his statements and illustrations, the tears whose appearance seems to afford such satisfaction to a certain type of fervid preachers. Sentiment must enter into the sermon on these Sundays. There is a place for it, and its use is inevitable. It must be genuine, and it must be reserved in use. If tears should come to the eyes of those who listen, let them flow as the result of no deliberate intention of the preacher.

The sermon on Mother's or Father's Sunday may be illustrated by incidents which are abundant in proof of the power of a parent's love to shape the lives of children and in stories of the loyal devotion of sons and daughters to the teaching and examples of their fathers and mothers. The preacher ought to exercise unusual caution in this regard and be sure that his illustrative material is true and in good taste.

Perhaps no other counsel is more timely and valuable than to urge the preacher to keep close to his own experience and to validate what he says by the canons of good

taste. Fidelity to this simple purpose will charge the sermon on Mother's or Father's Day with the true and moving sentiment which ought to mark it and which will save it from excess or weak sentimentality.

From the following suggestions a preacher may derive stimulating hints for the sermon on these occasions:

THE SHELTER OF MOTHER'S ARMS

Carry him to his mother.—II Kings 4:19.

The incident. When the little boy grew sick he was with his father and the men in the fields; then he was hurried to the haven of his mother's arms.

Mothers are ready and waiting for hurt and weary children. The world is like the burning oriental sun that struck the lad in the field; it hurts us; there is just one earthly place where we know we can go if our mother is living; mother will be ready to take us home.

Mothers understand. The one great fact about the mother-heart is its perfect sympathy. Mothers seem never to forget what it means to be a child. They feel with their children. They have the wonderful power to enter into life and share it.

Mothers are patient. No one else does for weak childhood what mothers do for it constantly and without the least complaint. They wait and watch and never despair.

Mothers help. Their love grows so practical! They seem to understand what will bring the most comfort and relief at just the right place. Mother-love is a great medicine.

A BOX FROM HOME

Moreover his mother made him a little robe, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.—I Sam. 2:19.

Samuel was away from home in the school of the prophets. His one great day of all the year was when his father and

mother came on the annual pilgrimage and brought him the box from home. And the one rich thing in the box was the little coat that Hannah made each year for her boy.

What did this coat mean to Hannah as she stitched it carefully? She sewed love into every seam; she wrought her prayers into the garment along with her thread. How she must have held it up each year and rejoiced to think that she was making it larger for the growing boy! How happy she was when she thought that it would keep him warm in a long night when he watched to see that the lamps did not go out at the shrine! Her whole soul was in the coat.

What did the coat mean to Samuel as he wore it? It made him anticipate the time when his mother would come again. He did his work all the better because he was reminded of her love and hopes for his future. So it became to him truly a sacrament, that is, a material sign of an invisible grace.

JEWELS AND CROWNS

My son, hear the instruction of thy father,
And forsake not the law of thy mother:
For they shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head,
And chains about thy neck.

—Prov. 1:8, 9.

Note the difference between law and instruction. One refers to the body of principles by which right living is guided; the other, to the constant explanation and illustration of those principles which make them reasonable and familiar. Both are necessary.

Loyalty to the teaching and training of parents in a good home are the jewels and the crown that beautify and ennoble the wearer. The true grace and dignity of life consist in fidelity to such truths as a father and mother impart to their children.

THREE GENERATIONS OF BELIEVERS

The unfeigned faith that is in thee; which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and, I am persuaded, in thee also.—II Tim. 1:5.

Faith is a gift and an achievement; it is also an inheritance. It cannot be taught; it has to be caught. It is transmitted in words, in deed, and chiefly in the spirit or temper of others. We have to make it our own in order really to possess it.

Faith grows and changes with each possessor and with every generation. The faith of Eunice was not precisely that of Lois; that of Timothy was unlike either. We must expect change. It is a sign of growth.

Making good with the faith of our mother. Not merely by repeating her creed. Realization of mother's faith must be the repetition of its spirit in actions. The loyalty that she expressed in her faithful life must also be expressed in ours.

GOOD FRIENDS

Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.—Prov. 27:10.

The great days in our lives are those on which we find new friends, both young and old.

Our friends of similar age.—The most natural of our friendships are those which we establish with those of about the same age. Probably the most precious and lasting of our friendships are those which began in neighborhood and school when we were children.

Our older friends.—There is another possible range of friendships, of which the text speaks. The friends of our father have a strong interest in us, and we also may justly claim their help because we are our father's children. A boy or girl will naturally be timid about claiming the interest or time of an older person, but this ought not to be so. A man's friend will welcome an approach from his children. He will be

glad to give help, counsel, and affection to the child of his friend. So we need never fear to enlarge the circle of our friendships, and we may include within it those who have known and loved our father.

A TRUE HOME

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.—Luke 1:6.

The happiest home results when both father and mother agree on the supremely important matters of life.

Divided households.—There is many a family which possesses all the material gifts for the making of a happy home, yet they are not united in the deepest spiritual agreements. Permanent family life may be kept up without these agreements, but something is lacking from the highest peace and joy of the home unless "both are righteous." If it is a possible achievement, common religious consent ought to be brought about on the part of both parents.

United households.—When both father and mother agree in their religious faith and practice, the best possible influence upon the children is assured. The most helpful influences for smoothing out the small daily irritations are at hand. The integrity of the family is maintained at its highest point. The influence of the family in the community for the best things is assured. The happiest memories are guaranteed to the children. The deepest satisfactions are furnished to both parents.

CHAPTER XIV

MEMORIAL SUNDAY

The Sunday before May thirtieth is generally observed by the churches with a service appropriate to the national Memorial Day, in honor of the soldiers who have served in the wars of the nation. The scope of Memorial Day, or Decoration Day, as it was formerly called, is generally extended by the churches and has become an occasion on which to commemorate all our beloved dead. The sermon on this Sunday therefore must be keyed to the notes of memory and hope.

The most obvious subject for the sermon on Memorial Sunday is the worth of human personality dedicated to noble ideals. It is the day to exalt the heroic, the sacrificial, and the brave aspects of human life. No community lacks the splendid example of men and women who have lived nobly and wrought bravely for the common good. In such ways as are consistent with good taste, the example of these men and women ought to be recognized.

As a pattern for the sermon on Memorial Sunday, in so far as it refers to the soldiers who fell in war, the consummate example is Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." The words of this need not be repeated; but the movement of its thought, paraphrased and amplified, is an incomparable model. It breathes the air of gratitude for the past and high resolution for the future. It states with masterly conciseness the great purposes for which American citizens ought to live. It is charged throughout with fervid religious passion.

The significance of Memorial Sunday for the community, however, is far wider than the honoring of the nation's soldiers. It embraces all the blessed dead of the community. Here, therefore, is the opportunity of the preacher to interpret the deeper meanings of life, death, and immortality. He will attempt to speak of all solemn griefs and lovely memories in the light of Christian truth. He will make the task of living so worthy, and human love so beautiful, that new values will be imported into all our relations and into every phase of love and loyalty.

The greatest opportunity of Memorial Sunday for the preacher is the privilege of stating again the warrants of the Christian doctrine of immortality. This we have touched briefly in discussing the sermon on Easter Sunday in chapter ix. On that day the principal argument is naturally connected with the resurrection of Jesus. On Memorial Sunday the widest and most inclusive range of evidence may profitably be passed in review. One of the most useful books to be read on the subject is Fosdick's *The Assurance of Immortality.* Dr. Fosdick states the major arguments for the Christian doctrine clearly and persuasively.

Aside from the argument from the personal experience of Jesus, there are many lines of converging evidence worthy of consideration. They can only be suggested by a few sentences here. The assurance of immortality has been cherished by the best and noblest members of the race. It has won the confidence of the strongest minds in recorded history. The beneficent results which flow from it in daily life give a strong warrant for its truth. Men do

not gather figs of thistles; nor do they produce golden deeds from leaden motives. The great doctrine works well in the rough-and-tumble of human life; it brings courage and comfort and joy into the experience of men. From the standpoint of the conservation of energy, immortality is confirmed. We know that, while matter and energy change their form, they are not destroyed in the transformation. If this is so, surely, in a far higher realm it is most incredible that the human spirit should be annihilated when it passes through the experience of physical death. Take so noble and wise a person as Louis Pasteur, for example. What an utter waste of the most precious energy it would be if he did not persist as a personal being after the end of his earthly life came. Surely the Creator who saves atoms will not waste human souls. The greatest prophets and poets of the race have been confident of personal immortality. They have sung about it even in the darkest night of the soul. Then immortality is demanded to answer the intuitions and yearnings of our own nature. Just as the eye argues for light and the wing for the air, so the great yearning within us for a deathless existence assures us that such an existence is a reality. This, from Tennyson's "In Memoriam," is one of many assurances,

> My own dim life should teach me this,
> That life shall live forevermore,
> Else earth is darkness at the core,
> And dust and ashes all that is.

Therefore, Memorial Sunday is one of the most appropriate days in the year for the sermon of comfort and encouragement. The preacher who knows his parish well,

understands how deeply the hearts of the people yearn for consolation and courage. The pulpit is much given to teaching, counsel, warning, and sometimes even to the severe censure of sin. The note of comfort is heard too seldom in modern preaching. The hearts of men are wistful and needy. Life is hard, and its losses are sometimes shattering. The one place to which men may turn with confident expectation is the Christian good news as they hear it from the lips of the sympathetic preacher. Let us not fail to give our congregations the grace of consolation on this Sunday when memory is quick and the sense of sorrow may be hanging in dark clouds over the entire landscape of life.

The following suggestions may start trains of profitable thought in preparation for the sermon on Memorial Sunday:

THE LIGHT OF A GOOD LIFE

> But the path of the righteous is as the dawning light,
> That shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
> —Prov. 4:18.

The blessedness and beauty of memory, especially as it dwells upon the meaning of a good life.

A good life is like the sunlight. It is silent and full of creative power. It makes no noise, but it is full of the energy that calls life into expression and sustains every living thing. This is the way a good man's influence works upon his age.

As the light increases from dawn to noon, so the power and beauty of a good life grows steadily. We do not know how fully human character has impressed the world until the man has gone from his material relationships. We appreciate Lincoln more now than was possible even ten years after his death.

The end of a good life is perfection. The great desires of

the spirit will not be mocked. All that we saw ourselves capable of becoming when we were at our best we shall finally become when God's will has been fully done in us.

All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

HARVEST HOME

Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age,
Like as a shock of grain cometh in in its season.
—Job 5:26.

Those whom we remember and honor on Memorial Sunday have passed from our sight at various ages; but today we give especial thanks for those who have gone from us after full and fruitful years.

The discipline of the years.—Like the season's changes of storm and calm from sowing to harvest, so the experiences of a long life run the full round of joy and sorrow, and discipline the spirit to nobler quality. Hardship brings strength; obstacles produce courage; ideals create hope; joy sustains; and achievement heartens us. The more varied the experience the more profitable the discipline.

The blessedness of fruitful living.—The richest gifts we enjoy do not come from the physical world but from human friendship, the sharing of joys and sorrows, the love and laughter of little children, and the rewards of hope. We are blessed by others, and we return it in service when we live in the Christian way. Nothing else pays such generous dividends as the fullest and most fruitful human love and labor.

The garnered life.—The discipline and profit come to their most perfect expression when an earthly life is completed in a good old age. There is a distinct quality of beauty and strength in the very faces of aged people who have lived nobly. They possess a kind of wisdom which is the product of wide

experience. They keep their balance between the heart of youth and the frost of disappointment because they have learned to see life steadily and clearly. As the years pass they learn to construe human life according to its divine values. Thus we know that for them "the best is yet to be."

THE HOUSE WITH MANY ROOMS

In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.—John 14:2.

The word translated "mansions" may be rendered "abiding-places" or rooms. The life after death cannot be described except by figures which must be familiar in order to be revealing. This is such a friendly and illuminating symbol.

One house and home.—Here we are sundered by differences of time and space, of purpose and action, of spirit and temper. This is one of the hardest to bear of all mortal experiences. One of the poignant quests of life is the search for harmony in the discords of our busy and fretful days. To work out a unified view of the world is one of our most bewildering problems. The great house of the Father's love is a symbol of the truth that in the life eternal we shall find the plan, the order, the beauty that we seek with such earnest endeavor.

A room for each.—Just as every room bears the mark of the individuality of its occupant, so in the vastness of the Father's house each may still be himself and find his own work. We are not to be absorbed back into the abyss of impersonal being. This mortal is to put on individuality yet more fully. Life after the episode of death must still bring us the privilege of being ourselves.

The room prepared by love.—It is like a boy who goes back home at the close of his first long absence in the city or at college. His mother has made his room clean and beautiful for his return. Familiar things are there and the little touches

that loving hands know how to give. The boy longs to get back to the room that is his. Jesus promises to prepare the abiding place for us in the Father's house. We need not fear to enter it; it will be familiar and more beautiful than ever.

THE COMFORT OF INFINITE LOVE

I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou art afraid of man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass; and hast forgotten Jehovah thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?—Isa. 51:12, 13.

The world sorely needs comfort. Not only in times of death and disaster, but constantly. Individuals must meet bitter grief; nations are distracted and afflicted.

Comfort may come from men in a measure. But the length of man's years, the limits of his weakness, the dearth of his wisdom, make his comfort partial.

God is the Source of comfort. This is due to the greatness of the divine power, the insight of the divine wisdom, the wealth of the divine sympathy, the healing strength of the divine love.

It is necessary therefore to point men to God if they are to be steadied through the strain of sorrow and upborne in the stress of disappointment.

UNSHAKEN FOUNDATIONS

Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe.—Heb. 12:26-28.

Within recent years, when it seems as if the world were almost shaken to pieces, what is the "kingdom that cannot be shaken" which we receive?

The everlasting reality of religion. This is innate in humanity. It cannot be destroyed even by violent changes.

The fact of the Father God. The God of Jesus is still the Sovereign Ruler of the universe.

The redemption of the world through Christ. While the explanations of this truth may change, the fact abides forever.

The triumph of right in a moral universe. The God whom we find in Christ is good, and his will must conquer in the end.

The power of an endless life. Immortality is a truth by which to shape daily conduct. The soul is deathless.

CHAPTER XV

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY

The second Sunday in June is generally set apart as Children's Sunday, and the service of worship is so planned that the children of the church school are present and often take a considerable part of the service. This is one of the happiest occasions of the church year. It comes at a season when the world is physically beautiful. The sight of the children of the church is always inspiring. The interest and affection of the people are called out to the maximum. It is one of the preacher's high days.

A sermon, in the strict sense of the word, is generally well-nigh impossible on this Sunday. The time will not permit the discussion of any large subject in a thorough way, even if it were appropriate or desirable. The tactful preacher will not attempt, therefore, to furnish a finished discourse on Children's Sunday. He will prepare instead a "talk" especially adapted to the apprehension and needs of the little people.

The subject of preaching to children deserves especial consideration in the department of homiletics. It has become one of the fascinating phases of the preacher's work. Out of the experience of recent years in this field have come the outlines of effective technique and a large and growing literature composed of sermons to children. It is impossible in this book to consider the points of technique. Obviously they are grounded in the general prin-

ciples of preaching, and every preacher will be largely guided in his "junior sermon" by his own temper and taste. He will work out his sermon projects according to what he has discovered to be the best methods of handling this particular factor in the order of common worship.

The literature in this field is abundant and worth careful study. Among the titles which merit attention are these:

Children's Object Story-Sermons by Otis Tiffany Barnes (3d ed.). New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1916. $1.00.

Little Ten Minutes by Frank T. Bayley. New York: Revell, 1909. $1.25.

The Children's Hour by Stuart Nye Hutchison. New York: Revell, 1918. $1.25.

The Dreams of Youth by Walter Amos Morgan. New York: Century Co., 1928. $2.00.

Church Year Sermons for Children by Phillips E. Osgood. Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs & Co., 1917. $1.25.

The Children's Bread by J. Edgar Park. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1916. $1.00.

Five Minutes with the Boys' and Girls' Congregation by William H. Walker. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1923. $1.25.

With God in My Garden by Leonard E. Dowsett. London: Allenson.

A Mountain Path by John A. Hamilton. New York: Doran, 1913. $1.00.

The Portion for the Children by Frank J. Scribner. New York: Macmillan Co., 1927. $1.75.

For outlines of a series of nine addresses to boys and girls gathering about the idea of Loyalty to Christ, see

Evangelistic Preaching by Ozora S. Davis (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1921; pp. 199).

The following texts and subjects may afford useful suggestions for preaching on Children's Sunday:

THE COMMANDMENT WITH A PROMISE

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.—Exod. 20:12.

The commandment which always has been binding upon us and never can be repealed.

What does it mean to "honor" parents?—We ought not to use the word without a clear idea of its meaning. It includes:

Respect. Because of their age and knowledge, because of what we owe to them, because of their love and care for us, we ought to look up to and respect our parents. To be disrespectful of that which is worthy of our high regard is the sign of a weak character. The strongest and bravest people in the world have shown respect for what is good and true.

Trust. This is more than respect. When we trust anything or anybody, we give ourselves to them or yield something to them. If we trust our savings to a bank, we give them over to the corporation to keep for us. Unless we have confidence in the bank, we will not give up our savings to it. At home we have to trust the wisdom, love, and care of our parents, and yield ourselves to them.

Obedience. Our parents have the right to give us commands because they know better than we what ought to be done. They do not do this as tryants, and we do not obey as slaves. Love lies back of it on both sides, and so it becomes a free and happy mutual action.

The promise.—This is something much more beautiful than a long life or great wealth. The meaning of the promise

is found in the inner worth of our days, not just their number. This promise includes:

Happy days. Respect, trust, and obedience to parents bring greater happiness than can be found in any other way. At first it may not appear so; but in the end it always comes out right.

Useful days. Also, in the long run obedience to parents always makes our days profitable to ourselves and to others. Such days bring joy to our parents and thus become useful. They bring profit to others because they are carrying out a wise and loving purpose.

DUSTING IN DAMASCUS

From II Kings 5:2–5. One of the most beautiful of the characters that crowd the Bible. A "thumb-nail" sketch of appealing and tender beauty.

The victory and power of love.—The little girl had every reason to hate Naaman and to rejoice in his affliction. We cannot understand the terrible meaning of a plundering foray in those old days of murder and rapine. The village had been burned. The home had been broken up. The men and boys had been murdered. The women and girls had been carried into slavery or into conditions worse than death. The author of all these evils was now in the clutch of a fatal and loathsome disease. The little girl had a right to say, "It is the punishment of God upon him and I am glad. He is going to learn now what suffering he brought to those I love." But she did not. Love conquered all hate and feelings of revenge. She wanted the general to get well. It was the high triumph of love over hate. It anticipated all that Jesus taught about loving one's enemies.

God's use of little things.—The words of the little girl seemed such a feeble instrument for changing the whole his-

tory of the kingdom. This, however, is the way God uses little things to bring about great events. Even vast machines depend for their efficiency on small parts. Battles that were decisive of the history of the world have often been determined by what appear to be small details. So the slight influences that even a little child can set in motion may finally lead to the most important results.

The glory of fidelity.—So we give the utmost honor to the little girl because she was faithful in performing a simple duty in a loving way with no thought of praise or reward. Such an opportunity does not come every day, but it may come any day. We never shall know that it is a great privilege in the guise of a small act by watching for it. The only way to be sure of doing that one duty as well as the little girl did, is by doing all our duties in the same faithful and friendly spirit; then we shall not miss it when the important duty comes.

A WISE SON

A wise son maketh a glad father;
But a foolish man despiseth his mother.
—Prov. 15:20.

The relation between parents and children is central in home life; wisdom is a primary virtue in the Christian home.

A wise child.—Summed up by the clause "maketh a glad father." What makes a man proud of his son? A strong, clean body. The physical charm and glory of youth is a priceless possession. An honorable ambition. What youth desires to be is one of its ceaseless joys. Good habits. That general group of habits which expresses a young man's personality is of supreme importance; when these habits are good and useful they bring abundant joy to parents. A high moral standard. The ideals of youth make it glorious. A manly religious faith. Not simply an inherited creed; but one that has been thought

through and earned by actual devotion to it in service. These make a father glad.

A foolish child.—His characteristics are summed up in the clause "despiseth his mother." What are the attitudes of one who despises his mother? He sins against all the gentle and noble aspects of human character. Mothers are helpful and patient and kind. To despise them is to assume the attitude of contempt toward all that makes life beautiful. He disparages the value of high hopes and noble ideals. A mother's yearning and aspiration for her child is one of the most sacred facts in life. One cannot set these aside without becoming crippled in his own spirit. Then the child that despises his mother sins against love, and that is the gravest human offense; essentially it is the denial of God. A mother's love is so strong and tender that only a nature that has grown coarse and brutal can despise it.

CHAPTER XVI

BACCALAUREATE AND OTHER ACADEMIC OCCASIONS

The baccalaureate sermon generally comes on a June Sunday and is one of the most inspiring occasions of the entire year in the community. The presence of youth in all the splendor of its expectancy and vision unites with the hopes and satisfaction of parents and friends to make graduation a high day. Especially is this an inspiration to the preacher if it is the commencement of the high school or college in his own community and therefore many members of the graduating class are well known to him.

There are so many lines of discussion appropriate to a baccalaureate sermon that they need nothing more than brief reference.

The meaning of the words "commencement" and "graduation" are suggestive of the true significance of the occasion. We are not ending, but only commencing, when the close of the course of study comes. It is the commencing of new and nobler lines of thinking, the beginning of more happy and useful labor, the undertaking of greater enterprises that are to lead to higher achievements. And graduation means only the taking of a step upward and forward, as the word itself is derived from its Latin form *gradus*, meaning a step. The journey is only begun on graduation day. It is a brave and happy step and is taken in great expectation.

Then the whole meaning of education may be considered on a baccalaureate occasion. This is not so simple as it seems at first glance, for the best experts in the world today are not altogether agreed on what we mean by "education." Clearly, however, it means something more than a mind well stored with facts. It means comprehensive and practical preparation for the imperial business of living. It involves the whole personality, and its worth is to be tested and proved by the way in which the educated person behaves after graduation has taken place.

Another subject appropriate to a baccalaureate occasion is summed up in the significance of the French words *noblesse oblige*, the privilege and obligation of those who possess most to serve most. Every gift carries with it the inescapable demand for its use. Here is an occasion on which the preacher may press home the truth that if the community has provided the means of securing an education, it has the right to demand that those who have been thus favored shall render in return a service commensurate with the gift. This is the meaning of education in a democracy, where service for the commonwealth is the very inmost law, binding upon all who have received the benefaction of the community through the public schools.

Another profitable line of discussion is the place of trained leadership in a democracy. Under aristocratic forms of government, leadership is imposed upon the community through a hereditary ruling class. In a democracy, leadership comes from the body of the people, the true aristocracy of worth. Every community must develop its own leadership, and the permanence and hap-

piness of the common life will depend in a principal degree on the quality of those who thus assume the privilege and responsibility of public service. In every graduating class there are the potential leaders of their communities in their generation. These young people may have been told this until they are thoroughly sick of hearing it; but they must be repeatedly reminded of the truth, to their own good and the profit of the community.

Therefore a baccalaureate occasion gives the opportunity to the preacher to sound the call to service with the voice of a herald. Here are those who have something to give, and they may be called to duty in no uncertain terms.

The other academic occasions come frequently and in large variety. Sermons at colleges and universities are often demanded of the preacher. High-school assemblies present one of the most attractive opportunities for real preaching, when, naturally, the sermon form will not be strictly observed but the genius of the sermon may be fully preserved.

The following texts and subjects are suggested:

HEARTS OF WISDOM

So teach us to number our days,
That we may get us a heart of wisdom.
—Ps. 90:12.

The purpose of education in the schools is so to prepare us for living that we may economize our golden hours and finally win for ourselves a heart of wisdom in the university of life.

The numbered days.—This does not refer to the "expectation" of the number of years which we may rely upon after

graduation. The actuaries of the insurance companies have furnished elaborate tables on this point. It means the economy of living as we wisely establish and sustain it for ourselves. We are to select that which is worth while as the purpose of daily living. We are to proportion our time according to the real worth of our engagements. We are to capitalize our energies so that their expenditure will issue in the largest good for ourselves and others. We are to be so self-mastered that we shall neither fret nor be discouraged. We are to live a balanced and ordered life.

The winning of wisdom.—No student can graduate in complete possession of wisdom. It must be earned in the actual experience of an ordered life. The facts of science or history or mathematics may be placed in the mind by courses of study. The wise heart and the stable character have to be gained at the cost of many a practical struggle where conflicting interests have to be harmonized. The price of many an unwelcome or unhappy experience must be paid in order that one may gradually master "the fine art of living well." Personal conflicts may result in finer sympathy and better self-control. Sorrow may yield the fruits of peace and deepened affection. The actual experience of home life may immensely enrich our affections and our poise. All the years of our lives are a real discipline in learning the full meaning of life with one another and with God on earth.

OUR HANDS ON THE PLOW

But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.—Luke 9:62.

Our education reveals its highest values in the definition of worthy purposes and the discipline of resolution to follow them through to achievement.

The straight furrow.—Jesus took his figure from agriculture. He knew how necessary it was for the first furrow to

be straight and for the others to follow it at the proper interval of space in order that all the soil of the field might be broken up and made ready for the casting of the seed. No plowman may wander wherever he chooses in the field and do his work well. The educated person is prepared to drive his furrow straight.

The forward look.—The plowman must look ahead. At times he may look back to check on the accuracy of his work and to gain information by which he avoids subsequent errors. This is only an incidental and momentary part of his work. His look must be ahead in order that he may guide his plow accurately to the turn.

The labor of plowing.—It is no easy task. The sun is hot; the work is hard; the day is long; the work is monotonous. The purpose of education is to prepare us successfully to meet these inexorable conditions. To know how to work is as important as to know the character of the work to be done. Genius consists chiefly in the power "to toil terribly." There are few darlings of fortune who are born with a golden spoon ready for their service. No earnest person would wish this to be his lot. We prize most what we honestly earn.

Following through.—The happiest and most useful men and women are those who follow their furrows through to the end in spite of all allurements to look back and all the pressure of the heat and the monotonous toil. At this point the will comes into action. Resolute and stubborn determination are necessary. We must "fight it out on this line if it takes all summer."

LAWS BECOME SONGS

Thy statutes have been my songs
In the house of my pilgrimage.

—Ps. 119:54.

Through the discipline of culture we learn to transmute laws and duties into privileges and inspirations.

Laws and duties.—We live under the reign of law, and we must meet the obligations of a regimented world. Duties face us with insistent demands. We must hear and answer their call. The elementary moralities are based on acceptance of life in the terms of duties which express the will of God. Taken alone, the duties of life become hard taskmasters. They produce a reliable but also a cold and legal type of character. There is a severity about interpreting life as law which must be relieved by gentler and more gracious insights.

Songs and privileges.—Contrasted with the laws are the songs, which furnish the inspirations for another method of living and another type of character. We sing when we are free and happy, when life is full of the privilege of joyous service. We are not trying to conform to a rigid statute; we are seeking to realize an inspiration which evokes a song in its pursuit. Work ceases to be drudgery when we can sing at it.

Changing laws into songs.—One of the problems of life, therefore, is that of changing laws into songs, of learning to sing the Ten Commandments. We start to do this when we realize that behind the law is the love and wisdom of the Law-giver, whose praise it is easy to sing. We continue when we accept every service as a privilege which becomes ours because we have shown that we have the native gift and the training which will enable us to perform it well. We sing the song completely when we become certain that our action will sometime be crowned with fruition because it is God's will.

CHAPTER XVII

NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

The vital connection between religion and patriotism has been recognized in almost every civilization. This was especially marked in Judaism. The separation between church and state does not involve the divorce of religion from patriotism but rather safeguards and guarantees their union and permanence. Love of native land is consistent with love of God. To strengthen one, should involve confirming the other.

Therefore it is to be expected that national holidays will be recognized by the church. The religious foundations of patriotism are the proper subject for the sermon on such an occasion. The materials available for use in preparing this sermon are closely related to those which were pointed out in chapter viii, "Birthdays of National Leaders." The Fourth of July in the United States is the most conspicuous occasion calling for an appropriate sermon on a patriotic subject. This gives the preacher an opportunity to present the Christian conception of patriotism, a matter which is not wholly defined in the minds of the majority of citizens. To clear away misconceptions and present the subject in its broadest possible aspect will be the preacher's purpose.

It is necessary, therefore, to overcome the most mischievous of the misconceptions of patriotism which are met in the modern world. The first is the individualistic and selfish view. Just as the family may be conceived in

the terms of a self-centered group, to which every member must be loyal in spite of any other families anywhere, which also have rights which must be respected, so the race or the nation may be isolated, regarded as self-sufficient, and its interests preferred to the rights of all other nations and races. This view, a moment's reflection will show, is nothing more than a subtle and un-Christian piece of selfishness. It has all the arrogance and priggishness of the stupid little prince of the fairy tale, who thinks that all the castle exists for is his comfort and service.

Then more rubbish has to be cleared up as the preacher attacks plainly and fearlessly the superiority idea and the inferiority complex in patriotism. One is as bad as the other. We have the superiority idea defined in the notion of Nordic supremacy. We see the inferiority notion breaking its fetters in the struggles of the small nations for recognition and self-determination. The whole problem is so vast and perplexing that the preacher who grapples earnestly with this subject will be forced to do a deal of fundamental thinking before he is ready for his sermon on true patriotism.

A strong statement of this aspect of patriotism is found in J. M. Kenworthy's *Peace or War?* (p. 30) as follows:

> In Bernard Shaw's "Saint Joan" he shows clearly the alarm of the Earl of Warwick of the day, at the preaching of Joan of Arc. She was instilling into the minds of the people the idea that they were Frenchmen and Englishmen, and not retainers or lieges of a particular military commander.
>
> Hence the burning of Joan.

Her witchcraft consisted in the preaching of a wider patriotism than the narrow feudalism of the day. A wider patriotism took the place of feudal loyalty; and a still wider patriotism is needed today—a loyalty to humanity to take the place of the local parochial patriotism which, when used for purposes of war, has been one of the greatest curses that has afflicted mankind. And if a strong central world government could be established and only that central government permitted to possess weapons of destruction and killing, men's minds could be turned from hatred of their neighbours to love of their kind.

But the fighting instinct remains in the minds of gentle and simple alike; and it is useful for ambitious, unscrupulous adventurers, dynasts or politicians, to be able in certain circumstances to appeal to this fighting instinct.

Neither races nor individuals are created "equal" in the strict use of the word. There are national superiorities and inferiorities which cannot be denied. To do this is to ignore essential facts in the universe as we know it. Certain nations are "favored," and other nations are "backward." The strongest have most to give to the weak, but even the weak have something to give to the strong. The true way in which to present this fact is to construe it all in the terms of obligation to serve and privilege to promote the common good. Let both strength and weakness be recognized, but let all boasting on the one hand and cringing on the other be represented as unworthy of a self-respecting nation. Every person seeking any place in community life for the love of the commonwealth is a true patriot and deserves all honor from his fellow-citizens.

Thus we must stress the meaning and value of "social

politics," and so infuse the sense of world-wide human relations into the ideals of patriotism that the Christian citizen will render his service to the state in the same spirit of loyalty and sacrifice that makes his religious acts sincere and laudable.

The Bible is one of the most fertile and available sources for right teaching on the state and political obligation. This is especially true in respect to the Old Testament, concerning which Charles Foster Kent says (*Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus* [1917], p. 24):

To the student of political science early Israel is a most instructive social laboratory. During these formative centuries many fundamental social principles were worked out in practical experience, formulated by Israel's prophets and lawgivers, and enforced by popular action. The first principle is that the state is organized simply to promote the welfare of the social group and of each individual citizen. Rulers are the servants of the people and should be governed in all their public acts by the demands of public welfare. No ruler, in order to gratify his personal ambition, has the right to use his power to deprive even the humblest of his subjects of his freedom or of his rightful possessions. Any tax or levy required to promote the general welfare of the people may justly be imposed, and the individual citizens are under obligation to abide by the decree of their properly appointed rulers. But any tax levied for the mere satisfaction of a ruler or a ruling class without regard to the welfare of the people is a crime. When rulers fail to promote the common welfare the citizens have the right to depose them and to take such measures as are necessary to protect the public interests. In other words, the ultimate source of all political authority rests with the people, and the safeguarding of their welfare and interests is

the primary aim of all government. It is evident that not ancient Hellas but Palestine was the original home of true democracy.

The following suggestions for sermons on the subject of patriotism are suggested:

CIVIC GLORY

Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him,
That glory may dwell in our land.

—Ps. 85:9.

The true greatness and glory of any nation are grounded in reverent union with God.

The desire for national glory.—This is instinctive with every citizen. We ought to be proud of everything in our national life that reflects honor and glory upon us. Just as one should be proud of the possession of personal powers, of his home and family, of his school and comrades, so one should be proud of his native land. This must not be boastful pride.

Vain sources of national glory.—There are many: more material possessions and natural wealth, military strength shown in great armies and navies, superior methods in manufacture or control of the world's markets, great institutions of learning and famous teachers. All these may do much for the glory of the state, but there are other and better resources.

Citizens who revere God and experience the power of divine salvation.—"Fear is not cringing dread; it is humble reverence in the conscious presence of Almighty God, resulting in the loyal effort to know and do His will." Out of this reverent attitude comes an experience of ransom from fear, release from waste and sin, the comprehensive experience described as "salvation." The stable and glorious nation is made possible by God-fearing and reverent citizens.

THE POWER OF THE COMMUNITY

And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto Jehovah for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.—Jer. 29:7.

Individual well-being is bound up with the welfare of the community; even on selfish grounds we should try to promote the city's welfare. The text gives us a high ideal of religious citizenship.

Seeking the city's peace.—This means bearing our own part in the life of the community: payment of taxes; bearing of office; sharing in all betterment projects; taking pride in the city's progress; recognizing its faults, yet seeking to correct them; not boasting, but building. This is the right attitude of a Christian citizen as he seeks the peace of the community in which he lives.

The city's gift of peace.—Every citizen is constantly acted upon by his surroundings. The people make the community; but, in turn, the city ceaselessly makes the people. Like the echo, the state returns in kind what is given it by the individual. The loyalty or looseness of the body of citizens in respect to law evokes a corresponding attitude on the part of each member of the group. It is like the pressure and quality of the air, which determines our physical health. Therefore, for our own good, if the city is injuring us, we must contribute a better individual life to the city, that it may finally help and not hurt us.

LOYALTY TO LAW

They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.—Amos 5:10.

The administration of justice.—The elders of the city sat at the gates to hear cases and pronounce judgment according to law. They represent the administration of justice and the sanctions of law and order. These are essential to the welfare

and permanence of human society. A community must be founded in just laws and regulations. If everyone did as he pleased, the commonwealth would perish in chaos. The individual must blend his life in the order of the community for their mutual well-being.

Defiance of law.—To be restive under all legal restraint and to defy law is peculiar to the modern world and especially to America. Our individual struggles produce carelessness in reference to community obligations. This is a radical fault, reaching to the foundations of the state. If there is general disregard of the popular will expressed in the laws of the land, the roots of civic welfare are cut.

Loyalty to law.—The Christian religion lays great weight on the obligations of the citizen to the state. It dignifies law and calls for respect and obedience to the regulations of society. Jesus paid his tax and performed his duty to the state. The discharge of our civic duty is as imperative as our worship and prayers. The Christian people are the salt and yeast in the political body to give it taste and keep it from decay. While the church and state are independent as institutions, they both lay valid claims upon the loyalty and service of the Christian.

FALSE LEADERS

Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth bribes, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.—Isa. 1:23; *see* 5:23.

The welfare and permanence of a community depends upon its civic leadership. This is a study of infidelity in high places.

Wrong relations to God and men.—The first clause goes to the root of the trouble. False leaders defy God's laws. That is the real secret of their faithlessness. Defiance of the laws of God is the spring of the betrayal of the trust which the people

repose in their leaders. Then follow unholy relations with evil men. Those who deny and defy God go steadily onward to become comrades of dishonest men. We cannot companion with a holy God and evil men at the same time.

Bribes and graft.—The specific aspect of false leadership now appears. These men who have disobeyed God and become the companions of thieves are receivers of bribes and graft. They pervert judgment for money and betray the people's cause for rewards. This is the positive iniquity of their practice.

Injustice to widows and orphans.—This negative aspect of their infidelity grows out of the positive phase of their disloyalty to God and their evil associations. The fatherless and widows stand for the defenseless classes in the community. They have an especial claim upon the honorable dealing and generous treatment of the leaders of public life. To despise them or betray them proves to be the utmost dishonor. So rebellion against God finally issues in the betrayal of sacred human trusts.

A new and still poignantly significant national observance is Armistice Day. This is the occasion for a sermon on world-peace. Whatever position the individual preacher personally may take concerning non-resistance, pacifism, or national military preparedness, there can be no question that the Christian gospel anticipates the time when fratricidal war, like slavery and other ills that afflict mankind, will be done away. It is the preacher's privilege to utter this note in his sermon on Armistice Day. He can do this and still be faithful to his appreciation of the valor of his country's defenders in time of war, or to the meaning of patriotism in popular life. The ideals of peace are surely not inconsistent with the motives and the

sacrifices of the soldiers who fought in the "war to end war." They came home with high hopes, in which their fellow-citizens shared. But ancient falsehoods are not easily displaced, and a long process of education is still necessary before the nations "shall learn war no more."

A source of material of primary importance is George Holley Gilbert, *The Bible and Universal Peace* (1914). It was like this courageous scholar and idealist to publish his book when the Great War was setting the passions of men aflame. It is a mine of golden ore for the preacher.

The following are suggested as appropriate texts and subjects for the sermon on Armistice Day:

THE ANGELS' SONG OF PEACE

Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.
—Luke 2:14.

God's gift to earth is peace, which cannot be realized except by those who please Him.

God's gift of peace.—This includes more than freedom from war. It involves order, harmony, and the reign of good will in all the relations of life. It extends to the family, industry, neighborhood, and community relations, as well as conflicts between nations, which are generally settled by the appeal to arms. This is the "age of gold" which cannot be ushered in by anything less than the love of God as it becomes the actual law of life for all the world.

Securing the gift.—This universal reign of good will and peace never can come into being except among those who are acting in response to certain inner principles of control.

The effort to create a world of good will by political or parliamentary action is in vain. It cannot be imposed upon mankind from outside; it must be created as the inner motives

and ruling principles in the minds and hearts of men who work out and create the institutions and programs through which these motivations become concrete. It is only to those who are described as "men in whom he is well pleased" that the reign of good will is to be expected.

Therefore the only sure way in which to establish and guarantee universal peace is to create the desire for it in enough men and women so that they will spontaneously create the institutions of a world of good will. This sanctions all the efforts of education, preaching, and promotion of every kind.

PEACE THROUGH PERSONALITY

And this man shall be our peace.—Mic. 5:5.

The most powerful single agent making for peace in this world is a living person who is himself mastered by the ideal and passion of peace.

The great promoters of peace.—The history of the appeal for peace is marked by great names, many of which are little known or partially forgotten, but who ought to be held in lasting honor and remembrance. Among these are: Hugo Grotius, author of *The Law of War and Peace*, of which Andrew D. White says, "Of all books ever written, not claiming divine inspiration, this has been of most benefit to mankind"; Immanuel Kant, who wrote an *Essay on Perpetual Peace;* Jean de Bloch, who wrote *The Future of War*. Consider also William Penn, Leo Tolstoi, George Fox, and Andrew Carnegie. Among significant Americans are: Elihu Burritt, Jane Addams, Edwin D. Mead, and Charles C. Morrison. Since the Armistice numerous books have appeared, among which Commander Kenworthy's *Peace and War* is notable.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace.—Supreme among those whose influence counts for peace is Jesus. No other personal force ever has counted so profoundly or widely. This is due to his

teaching. He never openly condemned war, but the plain and constant emphasis of his teaching is against it. The forces that he set into movement always have been in favor of peace in every department of human living. When the final organization of a world of peace is achieved, it will be seen as the creation of the personality of Jesus, working through many others whom he has inspired and sustained.

WAR: ITS COST AND FOLLY

Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?—II Sam. 2:26.

War is man's supreme folly and most costly delusion.

The sword devours.—There is no better word to describe the ravage of war. Like a fierce beast, it consumes all the most precious and useful possessions of mankind. Physical wealth, human life, gracious sentiments, and high ideals all disappear in the greedy maw of war. It sows the seeds of hatred, suffering, and disease for years to come. This is destruction and devouring of the worst kind. It would seem that rational beings would recognize this.

The end of war is final bitterness.—It may seem on the surface as if a war was the final solution of a human problem, but it never works out that way. Two animals may fight for mastery and settle the point of supremacy. But in fratricidal warfare the heritage of hate and the inevitable desire for revenge work out nothing but bitterness. The analogy between a case of family discipline, where punishment may be inflicted and no sting remain, does not hold in war. There is always the rankling sense of defeat and the smoldering fire of revenge. In time these issue in bitterness between brethren, which is a practical denial of the love of a common Father God and the good will which ought to bind together all his children on earth.

CHAPTER XVIII

LABOR SUNDAY

In 1894 the first Monday in September was made a national holiday to be "celebrated and known as Labor's Holiday." It is commonly known as "Labor Day," and the churches have recognized the preceding Sunday as a time when the dignity of labor is fittingly recognized by such changes in the details of public worship as are appropriate. Therefore the preacher must settle in his own mind the principles that should guide him in preaching on the subject of labor.

Manifestly a permanent factor in the message will be the effort to set forth the Christian view of work or labor. This is not an entailed curse upon the race as one of the disastrous results attending the "sin of Adam." Work is a divine gift and blessing, a means by which we express our own highest ideals, a point at which we share in the creative process and the profound joy of God. This was the way in which Jesus thought of his work, as he expressed it in John 5:17, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." This does not refer to manual labor alone, but includes the whole conception of work as the expenditure of energy in the achievement of a worthy purpose. In the light of this general statement the whole of the day's work is to be understood and evaluated. It is not drudgery; it is not the hard condition of a bread-and-butter order of life. Labor is man's way of becoming a partner with God in realizing on earth the kingdom of

love and goodness. Once a year it is worth while to renew this conception in the minds of the congregation. The first part of Dr. Richard Cabot's *What Men Live By* furnishes fine discriminations between work and drudgery, which is a distinction that ought to be made on Labor Sunday. Another expression of the same attitude is found in Henry Van Dyke's poem, "The Gospel of Labor," the last stanza of which reads:

This is the gospel of labor, ring it, ye bells of the kirk,—
The Lord of Love comes down from above to live with men
who work.
This is the rose that he planted, here in the thorn-cursed soil;
Heaven is blessed with perfect rest, but the blessing of earth
is toil.

The fact that the issues involved are so strained makes it imperative that the sermon should never be partisan. The industrial process is complicated; labor is only one factor in it. Wage-earners have their rights, but so have capitalists; and, still more, so have the consumers who are the forgotten factors in current discussions of the subject.

The church has no right to take up and champion exclusively the claims of any one of these factors. On Labor Sunday the Bible lessons, hymns, prayers, and sermon ought to reflect the preacher's sympathy with the partners in the process of industry, and also the consciousness that the consumers have their stake in the whole concern. The following suggestions are meant to be considered in this temper.

Suggestions for subjects and fresh material for use in

the development of the sermon appropriate to Labor Sunday are generally furnished every year by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.[1] If this does not come in season a request to the office will generally bring subject matter that is timely and appropriate.

The following texts and subjects fit this occasion.

THE BEATITUDE OF A HEALTHY APPETITE

> The appetite of the laboring man laboreth for him;
> For his mouth urgeth him thereto.
>
> —Prov. 16:26.

Hunger is a blessing and not a curse when we make it a spur to happy and useful labor.

The mistaken view of hunger.—Hunger that cannot be satisfied is truly a curse and an evil. It is common, however, to regard hunger as an affliction. It need not become or remain so. As a spur to action which is not accepted as a blessing, it may be only a tormenting influence.

The true view of hunger.—We need constantly recurring spurs to action and work. One of these is hunger, when it is correctly understood. It prevents indifference and laziness when it is accepted as an incentive to evil. It is like an inner impulse or an outward challenge and pull.

How to change hunger into an ally to sustain labor.—To get the true sense of its value. To yield to it as a practical and powerful motive. To respond to its repeated influence as it sustains us in prolonged and patient work. To give ourselves up to the fine enjoyment of hunger satisfied. To learn that those who are left undisturbed suffer most. Therefore, to thank God for the incentive and yield fully to it.

[1] 105 East Twenty-second Street, New York City.

WORK: A JOY AND AN OBLIGATION

Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant. —Matt. 25:20, 21.

Every person has certain natural gifts which he must put to use; and his reward will be conditioned upon the way he works with them.

The gifts of God.—No one person is so rich that he possesses all God's gifts. No one is so poor that he possesses nothing. Each has some talent, which belongs individually to him. Therefore responsibility for the use of gifts cannot be avoided.

The increase by labor.—The second law is that every gift may be increased by use. No possession is static; it is subject to the laws of ceaseless change. Even the physical body is being remade every moment. Wealth is subject to interest. That accounts for the folly and crime of the hoarded talent: it was denied the right to grow and increase.

The reward of fidelity.—The one who uses his talents well is both good and faithful. Honest management of all our God-given gifts is a moral achievement. Goodness finds one of its noblest forms of expression in the conduct of business. The word "faithful" is one of the noblest terms of praise that one could possibly desire. It means that one has been true; that he has been worthy of trust; that he has kept faith with his obligations of every kind. Thus the true worker, using his talents for God, is good and faithful.

SLACKER AND DESTROYER

He also that is slack in his work
Is brother to him that is a destroyer.

—Prov. 18:9.

The Great War gave us new meaning and value to the words "slacker" and "destroyer." Cowardice and cruelty

were connected with the terms. To be a slacker is also to be a destroyer.

We condemn destruction.—The wasting or the destroying by any person or group of the resources which God has provided for the common good of mankind merits the severest condemnation. All physical and spiritual gifts are meant for use; to fail to use them, or to misuse them, is therefore a sin against the race.

Slackness is a form of destruction.—Because it is so subtly disguised, we often fail to understand the real destruction in slack work. The surface of the great dam and the walls of the high building look firm and trustworthy; but dishonest materials and slack work have been put into them; finally in a critical hour they yield to strain, and the fearful destruction involved is an unspeakable calamity.

Slackness is robbery of God.—In her poem "Stradivarius," George Eliot makes the great maker of the world's most famous violins say, "If my hand slacked I should rob God." When he was taunted, Stradivarius dared to answer, in reply, "God could not make Antonio Stradivari's violins without Antonio." Therefore to fail to do one's best work with hands or brain, to be slack in material or technique, is to rob both man and God.

DIVIDING THE REWARDS OF INDUSTRY

The husbandman that laboreth must be the first to partake of the fruits.—II Tim. 2:6.

This just and universal principle of economics is valid today: those who create wealth have the first claim upon it. Wherever wealth is a joint product, it ought to be justly divided between its producers.

Invisible producers.—In agriculture and personal handwork, the producer is plainly in sight. It is relatively easy to reckon his stake in the profit and to be sure that he has it.

In the elaborate process of modern industry, the producer tends to become invisible. He is lost in the mighty machine. We must help him recover his own sense of his place and part in the industrial mesh, and he must share fairly in the profits of his labor.

Wealth is the joint product of labor and capital.—In the modern strife between these two parties in modern industry, we tend to lose the consciousness of personal labor in the great plan. The three partners who deserve consideration in the industrial process are capital, labor, and the consumer. The last is hardly ever recognized; yet his rights are paramount. He deserves to receive honest material, good work, and a product that has yielded each of the other parties a fair return. Those who have been forgotten have the right to claim justice.

God is the Giver of all wealth.—We share the creative process with one another, but God is the ultimate source of wealth. This makes production and distribution a sacramental enterprise, an outward expression of reverence and responsibility to God. Labor Sunday is the day when due honor is paid to God as the Creator and Lord, but every working day and each step in the process ought to prove that manufacture and commerce are sacred because thereby God is honored. Any dishonest practice is dishonor to the Creator.

SAFEGUARDS AND DESTRUCTION

> The rich man's wealth is his strong city:
> The destruction of the poor is their poverty.
>
> —Prov. 10:15.

A fundamental principle which works out constantly in everyday life.

The saving power of wealth.—Wealth has nothing wrong in it by intrinsic character. It is no fault to be a rich man.

Only when we use our wealth badly are we guilty of doing wrong. Wealth enables a man to gain more with less difficulty. "To him that hath shall be given." Wealth has power to command the resources by which beneficent work is done. Note how it was used in the relief of sufferers from famine in China. Wealth founds the institutions of education and charity; it supports scientific discovery. Therefore it is a strong city, not only to its possessor but to all mankind.

The destruction of poverty.—The poor lack the resources with which to make a beginning or to carry on in the process of gaining more resources. It is the man with scanty resources who must struggle hardest. So from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seems to have. Then the poor lose their courage on account of their poverty. The struggle is too hard and too long. Without daring and hope men cannot keep up the battle for success. Then poverty brings in many cases of envy and complaint, which also destroy the nerve of resolute action. Thus in their moral fiber, as well as in their material resources, the poor are destroyed by their poverty.

CHAPTER XIX

EDUCATION SUNDAY

The Sunday before the opening of the public schools has become widely recognized in the churches as meriting especial observance. Sometimes this falls on the same day as Labor Sunday, in which case the occasion may be deferred to a later date. Certainly every second year at least the Christian pulpit ought to recognize the values of education in the life of the community.

The problem of religious instruction in the public schools is beset by unusual difficulties in America, owing to the guarantees of the Constitution in the interests of religious liberty and to the intense jealousy of rival groups. There are certain tendencies in contemporary life, however, which are encouraging. The various projects designed to release pupils in the public schools for religious instruction by the churches on school time seem likely to work out in a definite policy which will give religion a place in education and at the same time preserve the rights of all religious groups in the community. This subject is most appropriate for the sermon on Education Sunday. Either to propose or to promote such a program of week-day religious education is worthy of the preacher's best preparation.

Again, the sermon on Education Sunday may well be concerned with the profound relations between religion and education. Ignorance is not the mother of devotion, but it is the fertile mother of many gross impieties. No

true devotion can permanently rest on the basis of ignorance. Faith is not the unquestioning acceptance of absurdities as though they were true; it is the response of the whole personality in a transaction that is reasonable and beautiful. So education is always the strong ally of religion and never its foe. A cold rationalism is like a killing frost; but true reasonableness is like quickening warmth and moisture to religion. The great principles are proper subject matter for a sermon on Education Sunday. The materials for such a discourse are abundant, and they admit of ready and profitable application in the varied life of the community.

The sermon preached on Education Sunday should be given the closest possible application to the daily life of students of all grades. One of the most certain tests of religion is made by the way in which it actually works in the daily life of a student. Make the situation concrete: here is a lesson hard to master and exceedingly rigid in its demands upon attention, thorough work, honest reasoning. Almost every person is tempted to shirk or work carelessly in this crisis. Now interpret the situation in the light of religion. The Christian ideal of scholarship becomes specific and impelling at this point. Truth is divine; to seek to master it is the business of a religious person. A student who faces such a concrete situation is bound to reason in some such way as this: Jesus promised that those who follow him should know the truth and that the truth should make them free. Therefore I will undertake this problem in this spirit and will carry my study through at any cost, because my religion inspires and helps me to do it.

There remains yet another phase of student life where religion has value and power—the friendships of scholars. This is perhaps the most precious and lasting of all the factors that enter into the complex process of education. The personal relations of love and loyalty established during student years are essentially colored and controlled by the experiences of religion. The greatest of all friendships are Christian. We love others when we together are loyal to Christ. The sermon on Education Sunday ought to stress this fact.

The scholar's ideal is essentially religious. In preparing for his sermon on Education Sunday, the preacher will be helped and inspired by the biographies of the great scientists. One of the most profitable of these is the *Life of Pasteur* by Vallery-Radot. This is merely one out of many stories which thrill the reader as he discovers the industry, vision, courage, and achievement of men, who, with true religious passion, have set themselves to the task of wresting truth from its hidden recesses and reducing to order and beauty the universe in which we live. The records of missionary heroism and endeavor are lustrous with the sacrifice and devotion of the heralds of the Cross; but the scholars, the explorers, the scientists, have also been motivated by a sublime and religious passion which must never be forgotten. Perhaps the closest of all relations between religion and learning is realized in the common motivation of the scientist and scholar by their common fundamental passion for research and service. Out of the wealth of their love and labor, the scholars and the preachers of today are making their precious and permanent contribution to life.

In addition to the material contained in chapter xvi, the following suggestions are made concerning texts and subjects which are appropriate to Education Sunday:

TIME, THE TEACHER

I said, Days should speak,
And multitude of years should teach wisdom.
—Job 32:7.

The courses in the University of Life are long and hard. They cannot be quickly mastered. We shall lose all our courage unless we take time into our reckoning. Thus Time becomes a great teacher.

Only truth that has been thus mastered and tested is worth while. Truth needs to be wrestled for and pondered in order to relate itself to life.

Therefore we gain patience and self-control in the process of learning life's lessons. We begin to appreciate the patience of God.

Thus we acquire sympathy for those who are still learning life's lessons. We remember what it costs us to learn from Time the Teacher, and therefore we are patient with others.

AN EDUCATION WORTH HAVING

And all thy children shall be taught of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of thy children.—Isa. 54:13.

Note the general character of this education; it is for all. As a nation cannot exist half-slave and half-free, so a nation cannot exist and make progress into happiness if it is half-ignorant and half-educated.

But true education is more than knowledge of the facts of the natural world. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Prov. 9:10).

The result of education founded in the knowledge of God is peace. The permanent happiness of all the nations of earth will finally be secured when they come to know one another in relation to the common Father of humanity.

LEARNING AND DOING

Teach me thy way, O Jehovah; I will walk in thy truth.—Ps. 86:11.

First comes the task of learning. In order to live right we must be taught the ways of God. This means the giving of truth on God's part and the learning of truth on ours. This is not knowledge for itself alone; it is for the purpose of life.

Second comes action, in which the truth that we have learned is put into practice. We *walk* in it; that is, it becomes a rule of life for daily duty. And action in the line of truth makes it easier to acquire more truth.

TAUGHT THE SUPREME LESSON

For ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another; for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren that are in all Macedonia.—I Thess. 4:9, 10.

Note the significance of the single word "God-taught" as describing a true Christian. We are the disciples or learners of God.

We have a great Teacher. The wisest man cannot reveal the meaning of life to us as God can do.

We have a great truth. It is the greatest of lessons to learn how to live. We may not be able to master all the books, but we must learn to master ourselves.

We have a great brotherhood. The fellowship of all those who are disciples of the Father is a wonderful bond of unity to keep human hearts together. All Macedonia finally must include all the world.

CHAPTER XX

RALLY AND HOME-COMING SUNDAY

Under various names the Sunday when the forces of the church are rallied for the inauguration of the annual program, generally in the autumn, is coming into quite general observance as Rally Sunday. Sometimes this is called "Home-coming Sunday." The program for the day is variously planned; almost always there is some definite enrichment of the usual order of service; and in every case where a sermon is demanded, it must be prepared with a view to the actual situation in which the church is found and must voice a summons, specific and heartening, to advance along definite lines of service.

It is obvious that the mood of hope and expectancy ought to characterize the sermon on Rally Sunday. In many cases it is true that the preacher tends to present the difficulties involved in church work, and at times even to scold. Problems would not be problems if they involved no difficulties. It is the mark of wisdom to face them fearlessly after they have been defined carefully. The one factor that must never appear in the Rally Sunday sermon is the scolding note. It is useless to declaim against the indifference of absentees in the presence of those who have had the courage and loyalty to continue the practice of coming to church under a scolding ministry. To point out the items in a program of courageous advance by the church in the community calls for the preacher's courage and confidence on Rally

Sunday, and he must not fail his congregation at this point.

If the program for the year has been defined in the terms of specific details, it is all the better as serving the uses of the sermon. Many appeals from the pulpit are like those disheartening injunctions to a small boy at the beginning of the day to "be a good boy." What he wants is to be shown definite good acts that he may do. The blanket command to "be good" is dismaying. Similarly the command to the church to "serve the Lord" lacks precision. The church wants to be shown a certain half-dozen things that it ought to do and can do. These actual engagements then become a definite and coherent project of serving the Lord.

Another source of material for the sermon on Rally Sunday is found in the records and examples of the churches and institutions which have undertaken difficult projects and have carried them out successfully. We sometimes enjoy our gloom as we contemplate all the imagined weaknesses and failures of the church and its program. This is a mistake. Everything that ought to be done can be done in some way. More than one experiment may have to be tried; more than one delay may be unavoidable; but in the end the church that makes a large program in resolute faith and then addresses itself with courage and patience to carrying it out cannot be defeated. This is the fundamental conviction that ought to underlie the sermon on Rally Sunday.

Another note is the value of co-operation. Whatever the year's program may be, it depends finally for success upon the united effort of the people. The preacher is the

one who must sound the note of co-operative effort in the forward movement. He may do this in confidence that it will not be in vain. When the members of a Christian congregation are faced with a real need and with a specific program of service to meet it, they do not fail. Much of our weakness and inefficiency in church life lies in the fact that the plans for moral and religious activity are so indefinite and remote that they do not appeal to strong men and women. There has to be something more than ushering in the center aisle or "pouring" at the Thursday tea to arouse much real action in vital and energetic men and women.

Then the program proposed on Rally Sunday and promoted by the sermon ought to be big and vital enough to capture the imagination of the people. Many a church stands trembling on the brink, reluctant to undertake a large and aggressive program for fear of failure, when the challenging program is the only one that can win. Little schemes often fail in the very place where a big project would go on to success. The strategic action is to make the program so big that it will command attention, startle the somewhat somnolent into action, challenge the community. The preacher who has this sort of a project as the subject of his sermon on Rally Sunday can sound a ringing note from his pulpit and confidently expect success.

Rev. John A. Hutton brings out a valid principle in these wise words:

> I am quite sure that we are altogether wrong in urging people or arguing with them to come in amongst us, and that it would be a more remunerative policy, even as a policy, so to heighten our own esoteric and communal life that outsiders

would become first (and this with increasing difficulty) contemptuous and superior, later abject and inferior, curious, envious, coming about like Nicodemus at night, and finally joining the ranks and asking for a turn with the flag.[1]

Now Dr. Hutton does not mean that the church or the preacher ought to adopt a lofty "take it or leave it" attitude; but he speaks from a long and successful experience when he says that the best way to capture a community is to have something to offer it which is so big, so vital, and so commanding that the response will come, not because the people are persuasively advised to come, but rather because they see the project in actual operation and know that they can afford neither to ignore it nor be neutral toward it.

The following are suggestions for sermons on Rally Sunday:

"FORWARD!"

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.—Exod. 14:15.

The living church must be a growing church; it must press forward into new enterprises. The advance will call for heroic decision, but the rewards and promises of divine help are attractive and sustaining.

Forward out of the old! The past must be left behind as it is built upon. Estimate the resources of the church.

Forward into the new! Define some of the lines of advance in the church program and call for service.

Forward under the Great Commander! We do not move alone. Christ is with his church. He knows the problems and the resources. The new year must bring the church nearer Christ.

[1] *Guidance from Francis Thompson in Matters of Faith* (1926), p. 3.

BUILDING WALLS

So we built the wall . . . . for the people had a mind to work.—Neh. 4:6.

The fallen walls indicate the extent and vital importance of the task that is before the church. They must be restored before the community will be safe and happy; the church must rebuild them.

The rebuilt walls stand for the final success of the church as it attacks its great problems. The work has not yet been accomplished; but all the promises and resources of God are assurances of its final completion.

The secret of all success is revealed here. The leaders did not do it all; the people did not; but both together achieved success. The purpose of the working people was the assurance of the achieving church.

A GREAT PROMISE

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.—Luke 12:32.

The church always has been a "little flock" as compared with the great world. It is now. In point of numbers and apparent power it seems unable to cope with the world-situation.

But it is through such a small and devoted group that God can work for the redemption of the world. This has been proved repeatedly in the course of history.

The good will of God is the chief reliance of the church as it undertakes the tasks that come with each new year. Many other items enter into the year's program, but the promises of God are of supreme importance.

CHAPTER XXI

PRISON SUNDAY

The recognition, on a particular Sunday, of the needs of prisoners is far less general than it well might be. The designation of a day for this purpose, generally in the late autumn, has become prevalent enough to warrant a brief consideration of it as an occasion calling for an especial sermon on the subject.

There is enough recognition of this matter in the Bible to warrant its consideration in the pulpit today. A single instance will suffice. When Jesus, according to the records in Matt. 25:31–46, gave the standards according to which final judgment is pronounced by the King, this appears: "I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Along with the hungry, thirsty, unclad, lonely, and sick folk appeared the prisoner. The poor we have with us always; and we are painfully conscious of the fact, because sometimes they are disagreeably near. The prisoners we have also with us, but they are generally walled away at a distance; and we are jolted awake to the fact of their existence only when some horrible experience of jail-breaking is reported in the press, or Prison Sunday comes around in the calendar and we are asked to remember the words of Jesus or to recall the incident of a jailor's conversion. Seldom are the prisoners in our thoughts or prayers. Manifestly, however, we ought not to forget them.

The difficulty of preaching appropriately on Prison

Sunday grows out of the fact that the majority of preachers have had little practical experience with prison life and do not therefore have any large amount of personal knowledge of the world in which men and women deprived of their liberty for the cause of crime, think and act. The sermon on Prison Sunday is in danger of being a quite artificial utterance, addressed to those who are deeply satisfied that they are out of prison, by one who never has been in and knows practically nothing about the subject.

Therefore it is necessary to take every precaution in the effort to avoid unreality and sentimentality in preaching on Prison Sunday. It is necessary to keep in mind all the while one is preparing the sermon that prisoners are human beings and that there were actual causes of the crimes for which they are suffering penalty. The preacher's mood must involve both severity against evil-doing and sympathy for the weakness of a human being that has led him into crime.

This is a difficult balance to strike, as anyone knows who has done even a little earnest thinking in the matter. On the one hand it is easy to place all the blame on the person who did the wrong, affirm that he deserves to suffer the full penalty for his misdeeds, and leave the matter there. "The wages of sin is death." On the other hand there is a tendency to lay all the blame on the inheritance and the surroundings of the person sentenced to prison, and to affirm that it is society rather than the prisoner who ought to be in jail. Somewhere between the two extremes the truth lies, and the preacher must think his way through this difficult terrain.

Even more difficult than the fixing of guilt is the definition of the purpose of punishment. Here we need to know something about modern conceptions of penology. The purpose of punishment is not retaliation but reformation. Society does not put a man in prison in order to take vengeance upon him. The prisoner is shut away from society in the first place to protect society, and for the still more important purpose of inducing in the prisoner a better mind. The discipline of prison is designed finally to restore the prisoner to himself and to society with altered motives for the regulation of his life. The sermon on Prison Sunday ought clearly to set forth this purpose and to help the congregation to see the true standards by which to judge both prison and prisoner.

The question of the warrants for capital punishment is in the air more and more; and Prison Sunday may be the best time to present the matter, if the preacher desires to do so. Gen. 9:6 seems to be explicit and final in the case: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The uniform practice of many centuries also gives the warrant of custom for capital punishment. But the more men study the teachings and spirit of Jesus, the less confident they must become that we are warranted in taking the life of any human being. The dangerous person ought to be isolated from society, but what right have others to deprive him of life? The question is surely appropriate for discussion in the Christian pulpit.

The texts and subjects that follow are offered as suggestions for sermons on Prison Sunday.

CHRIST IN PRISON

I was in prison, and ye came unto me.—Matt. 25:36.

The Christian churches have sadly neglected their duty to prisoners in the past. They have paid chaplains to do what Jesus said was a common Christian duty. This includes not only those who are in jail but all who are imprisoned by sin.

The church must "come" to the prisoner. He cannot go to it. This may involve the doing of an unwelcome duty by certain individuals, but it is the command of Christ.

Jesus said that to do this to a prisoner is to do it to him. If Christ were where we could do something for him, we would be eager to make any possible sacrifice. When we place Christ in the prisoner's place, we shall be as eager to visit him.

SONGS IN A CELL

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them.—Acts 16:25.

Suffering imprisonment unjustly, awake at midnight, in a wretched cell, Paul and Silas had all the conditions tending to make them angry and sullen.

But the consciousness of their integrity and their faith in Christ made them sing in the prison. A good conscience pitches the tune of a midnight song.

The prisoners heard them. It was a thrilling testimony of faith. It made the prisoners want to know the God who would enable their comrades in suffering to sing in the night.

The faith of Paul and Silas is the only power that will keep us out of peril of prison and bring us finally into liberty in case we suffer unjustly.

OUT OF PRISON

Bring my soul out of prison,
That I may give thanks unto thy name.
—Ps. 142:7.

The release of prisoners that is desirable is not accomplished by the indulgent action of a generous pardoning

board. It comes from the breaking of the soul's bondage to sin and evil habit. This is the gift of God.

The soul is in prison before the body is jailed. The great prison house is sin. It shackles the spirit in the bonds of wicked habits.

God can bring the soul out of prison. This great reformation is Christian salvation. When a prisoner takes Christ as his Master, he prepares the only sure way of final release. He thereby escapes, not only the results of sin, but the sin also.

The act of praise is the true recognition of the soul's release. A singing heart helps to keep one from doing wrong. We ought to thank God most of all for his great redemption.

THE EMANCIPATOR

He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.
—Luke 4:18, 19; Isa. 61:1.

Christ is the great Emancipator, not only to those who are in actual bondage for crime, but for all who suffer from and for sin. Three classes are described:

Those imprisoned by sin. This is a bondage more terrible than any imposed by the state.

Those bruised by evil. Nothing hurts so deeply and so seriously as sin.

Those blinded by error. Wrongdoing of all kinds brings us into darkness; it takes away the power to see clearly.

All these classes may be rescued and restored by Christ. They may come into the welcome year of the Lord out of the unwelcome years of their prison service.

CHAPTER XXII

ALL SAINTS' DAY

This anniversary falls on the first day of November, and in the strict sense of the word is celebrated in commemoration of those who have received official canonization by the church. This use of the day is extended by Protestants to include all those who have lived in such a manner as to deserve the name "saint," as this word is defined at the beginning of chapter ii.

Perhaps a more satisfactory term for Protestant preachers would be "All Souls' Day," which, however, is not observed by liturgical Protestantism. It falls on the second day of November and celebrates all those who have died in the Christian faith.

In certain respects the day is closely associated with Memorial Sunday, and the sermon appropriate to it may partake of the general character of the discourse on the Sunday before May 30 (see chap. xiv). There is this distinction, however, that on All Saints' Day we have in mind distinctly those who have died in the Christian faith; on Memorial Sunday our scope is wider, including all who have passed into the unseen world. The notes of gratitude, comfort, and hope will sound in the sermon.

The following brief suggestions are made for this anniversary:

VOICES FROM THE SILENCE

All the saints salute you.—II Cor. 13:13.

The universal Christian greetings of earth are a symbol of the sublime fellowship of the living and the dead.

The greeting of common life.—As men and women in distant places were united in the bonds of common vital experience, so those whom we have lost from sight still live and salute us. What the conditions are under which they live we may not understand, but that they truly live there as we do here we may rest assured. Living for them has become simply more abundant life.

The greeting of common satisfaction.—As the men and women who sent their salutations to those whom they had not seen in Corinth, so we may be sure that rewards, joys, and satisfactions in the life immortal warrant our fellowship with our unseen friends. Life is rich in attained happiness for them, and they bid us enjoy to the full our achievements here as a foretaste of what we shall enjoy when we join them in a still greater bliss of satisfied desire.

The greeting of common love.—This is the basis of all happy human fellowship on earth. It must be the same in the Father's house. Love of God and of one another simply grows rich and ripe in communion with God. By all possible and subtle ways this gracious encouragement comes to us as we open our souls to response by living richly, achieving largely, and loving steadfastly in all our human relationships.

THE REUNION

I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.—II Sam. 12:23.

Those who have passed from our human scene wait for us to join them in the blessed reunion of the deathless life.

The oak cannot go back to the acorn.—Through the experience of death the human spirit leaves the mortal forms which it cannot resume again. This would be to deny every law of development. Lincoln in the White House cannot return to Lincoln the boy in the lowly cabin. He had progressed into higher experiences. The only way in which to understand those experiences is to press onward to attain them.

The acorn can grow into the oak.—The human spirit may not return to its physical incarnation again; but the living person may proceed onward in time to join the company of the blessed dead. Within us are the potencies which make possible the life with God and with all those who have passed into the life immortal. Therefore the saints are the beckoners into the more abundant life. They bid us press onward to join them. The unseen world becomes the highest of incentives, urging us to seek it with deep yearning and practical endeavors after the Christian life, in which we all are made one in Christ.

THE HAPPY DEAD

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.—Rev. 14:13.

The words of comfort and courage come to us from those who have passed "to where beyond these voices there is peace."

Happiness awaits us.—This is the beatitude for those who have experienced the death of the body. It comes to us "in midst of mortal pain." From our standpoint, death is separation, suffering, sorrow. From theirs, it is fulfilment, enrichment, joy. We could not wish or call them back if we know that they fare better in their fuller life.

The toils are over.—"Labors" does not mean action; it means "toils." It involves weakness and weariness, conflict

with forces too great, the bearing of burdens too heavy. All mortal anguish of spirit is included in the term. This is no more the lot of the happy dead.

Character and worth endure.—This is the meaning of "works" as distinct from labors. All that has worth in the earthly life shall have worth forever. What we take with us through the portal of death is our character, our value to God. This never can be lost. Honor and truth, love and sacrifice, never can be taken away from us. They will still be our possessions in the life immortal.

CHAPTER XXIII

VETERANS' SUNDAY

Now and then the interests of the aged members of the congregation are especially recognized on Sunday. Various names are used to designate this occasion, such as "Old People's Day." No term that we ever have seen seems quite accurate and happy; one of the best terms uses the word derived from the Latin root meaning "old" and therefore designates the day as "Veterans' Sunday." Even this is not altogether satisfactory, but we use it here to denote the occasion when the elder members of the congregation are honored and the sermon is especially adapted to their needs. On this occasion particular efforts are put forth to bring all the aged members of the congregation to the service. Automobiles are requisitioned and the committee on transportation is thoroughly organized.

The sermon on Veterans' Sunday will be prepared with keen pleasure. Old age kindles admiration, gratitude, and affection. There are lines in the faces of men and women who have followed the Christ for many years, which must resemble the outlines of his own noble countenance. The gracious loveliness and the disciplined strength of the veteran members of a church make it a rare joy to prepare a message appropriate to the Sunday set apart to honor them. It may be appropriate to speak of "crabbed" age in certain instances, but surely this does not apply to aged Christians who have been lovely in their

lives and whose presence is a ceaseless benediction in the community.

To tell these gracious men and women how much they are loved and honored is a happy privilege. The sermon on Veterans' Sunday ought to do something more than this, however. In so far as it can be done with becoming modesty, not assuming that youth or middle age can speak fully for the aged, the preacher ought to try to capitalize for the good of the congregation and community some of the results of Christian experience to which the veteran Christians bear witness. In order to secure the material for this part of his sermon, the preacher will find that the results of calls involving quiet and revealing talks with the old members of his parish will be most rewarding. These members will tell him where they have found help in their Christian way of living; what the struggles and victories of the Christian life actually are. Without identifying the authors, it is possible to make a sermon thus grounded in the experience of men and women who know the realities of the Christian way of life a positive contribution to the highest religious life of the community.

Age and experience confirm the validity and value of the great Christian truths; they also strike the note of hope and courage. The Christian veterans will seldom be found expressing any form of pessimism or despair. They know what life means, for they have plumbed its depths. And they are not dismayed at the nearing end of the journey. The cynics and croakers are seldom found among the aged members; this dismal indoor sport is the pet avocation of the young or the favored, who ought to

be thoroughly ashamed of themselves for their folly and flippancy.

The following are suggestions which may be found useful in the preparation of the sermon for Veterans' Sunday:

WAS RABBI BEN EZRA RIGHT?

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made.

This is an unusual and somewhat bold use of a modern poem, but it is justifiable and may yield rich rewards if properly used.

First, make a careful study of Robert Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra," noting carefully the great conclusions concerning the meaning of human life as made from the standpoint of old age, which the poet puts into the mouth of this winsome and noble fictitious character.

Then, with these conclusions clearly in mind, talk with several of the best and oldest Christians in the parish, and ask them to discount or confirm these findings from their own experience with the Christian life as they have actually lived it. These conclusions may be used anonymously and with good taste, and will have such convincing power as could not be derived from abstract arguments.

Add to these the distinctive Christian notes of faith, hope, and love, in order that the testimony may be complete.

LIGHT AT EVENTIDE

But it shall come to pass, that at evening time there shall be light.—Zech. 14:7.

The text suggests the way in which the rich experience of many years may become luminous and beautiful.

The light of tempered judgment.—Youth tends to judge hastily and positively, sometimes even harshly, without discrimination. Many years of practical experience furnish better standards and more data for comparison. Therefore older persons enjoy a larger background and a wider range of facts to make their judgments accurate.

The light of kindness and sympathy.—As the years pass we learn how weak all men are in the presence of temptation and trial. So the mellower years of life bring a spirit of sympathetic kindness. Men learn the fuller meaning of struggle and sorrow as they pass through its refining discipline. Many have passed from our human sight as the procession of the years goes on. Suffering may harden us, but generally it mellows and chastens us.

The light of anticipation.—The Christian faith offers an ample compensation for the withheld completions of life. Paul describes it as the crown of righteousness which is "laid up." It is something beautiful and splendid, waiting to be revealed. This light lies on the path of veterans as it cannot shine on the rugged ways of youth. It is a foregleam of light from the celestial city.

SURVIVING WITNESSES

Five hundred brethren, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep.—I Cor. 15:6.

This little glimpse of an early church reveals the reality and power of the continuous testimony of the older friends of Christ.

The absent witnesses.—They are here described as having "fallen asleep." Another description is: "he being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4). The words and actions of the friends of Christ who have passed from the human scene are vocal and convincing. They have been speaking in every century of Christian history. Their number is beyond reckoning, from

the day of Stephen to the present hour. Augustine and Luther, Wesley and William Booth, Phillips Brooks and Matthew Simpson, are united in their testimony to the power and presence of Christ.

The present witnesses.—Those who are still alive furnish the more abundant testimony. These are the veteran witnesses who yet remain in our homes, churches, and communities. Their evidence comes out of long experience in the actual practice of the Christian way of living; it is not theoretical. It is concurrent, although it represents various ways of thinking and bears the strong mark of individuality. It is positive, confirming the great abiding faith of the Christian religion, put in the form of clear affirmations.

HONORED WORKERS

. . . . Who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.—Matt. 20:12.

Every church has been built up by the labor and self-sacrifice of men and women who deserve the greatest honor for their work of faith and labor of love.

The burden.—Veterans are men and women whose shoulders are bent by the pressure of heavy burdens. The struggle for the material equipment of the church is a witness to the sacrifices involved in securing it. The cathedrals were erected by this means. The message of the church has been defined by the struggle of the congregation to express and validate it. The spiritual passion of the congregation is the gift of those who have wrestled for it.

The heat.—Churches come into being through struggle. The scorching heat of temptation must be endured by the victorious church. Open opposition must be met, because the church presents a claim which cuts squarely across all sin and selfishness. The achievement of individual Christian char-

acter is the issue of "many a sorrow, many a labor, many a tear."

The assurance of the veteran.—Out of such testing and transforming experiences comes the greatest contribution of the veteran member to the life of the church. Younger members know that the burden is no heavier for them, and the heat no more scorching, than it has been for the older members of the church. The veteran's confidence is the assurance of the beginner and the novice.

THE FAITH OF THE FATHERS

For therein [by faith] the elders had witness borne to them.
—Heb. 11:2.

Older members of the church find their present strength in the tested faith of their youth.

Time proves truth.—We are always eager to have the truth confirmed. Sometimes this comes to pass through convincing argument. Occasionally it issues from the confidence which one has in the witness' personal character. Most often this confirmation comes from the words and deeds of those whose actual experience has covered many years of human struggle.

Time is, therefore, the best witness.—What seems good for today may be only a passing fashion; that which is good for all the days possesses the most convincing power. Its sufficiency to furnish power in the past assures us that it is adequate for the present. What it did once it can do again.

The blessed presence of the witnesses for faith.—Among all the sources of power for the community and the church, these vindicators of the energy of faith stand supreme. The good report and the witness of reality is more potent than any argument.

"Faith of our fathers, holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death."

CHAPTER XXIV

CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES AND DEDICATIONS

Among the interesting church occasions that call for an especially prepared sermon are the anniversaries and the dedications of church buildings. The most appropriate subject for discussion in this sermon is the character and credentials of the Christian church. Therefore the widest general preparation for the sermon will be made as the preacher reviews his idea of the church.

It may be thought of as the inevitable institution of religion. Man is "incurably religious," a praying animal. And he must have an adequate institution through which to realize the inner demands of his religious affections. Because of domestic love, families come into being; because of patriotism, great political parties are created and causes are championed; because of the thirst for knowledge, schools and books and libraries are established. According to the same profound principle in human experiences, churches come into being. They are not imposed upon communities, but they emerge from the primal movements of the human spirit. If they were swept out of existence today, new institutions of the same general type would be called into action tomorrow in order to express the innate demands of humanity. Institutions often become stereotyped and lifeless, but they are then on the sure road to be discarded. The creative ideal evolves and sustains the living institution.

Then the church is the agency of the community through which it expresses its adoration and worship. The universe is still full of the wonder and awe with which the first men beheld it. Man is the animal that responds to the influence of the divine with reverence and worship. To worship in the best way men must seek God together. They must have fitting places and adequate forms, with dignity and beauty enough in them to match the nature of the God whom they adore. The church supplies these places and forms, and it is done for the community. The general groundwork of the church never changes; its unessential forms are often changed. Kings and empires pass, as a great hymn expresses it; but the church is praying yet without change, and the solemn voice of her worship still is heard.

Again, the church is the teacher of those great truths by which men live. Academic and scientific truth is taught in the schools and laboratories. But there is still another kind of truth, that by which we order our lives and shape our conduct. As someone has put it, "Not general theories but the actual motives and character of men are important." The binomial theorem never made anyone more trustworthy in business or more comfortable to live with; but Christian truth presents new standards for conduct and actually changes human character. Now these are the truths that the church presents, through all its various activities, for practical incorporation into daily living. Hence its permanence in the organization of the community and the necessity that it be maintained, along with the library and the laboratory, for the highest welfare of mankind.

Through the church comes also the gift of creative energy, which enables men to achieve in practice what they have abstractly defined in ideal. It is not possible to explain how this is so, but the fact that through the church new powers flow into impoverished and disorganized lives cannot be gainsaid. For the renewal of its moral energy and spiritual passion the church must be sustained in the community. It is not a magic device, but it somehow succeeds in re-energizing those who seek its fellowship and respond to its teachings. Help comes out of the unseen, and the divine breaks through at the point of contact with the church. The witnesses to this experience are multitudes, and the truth may be affirmed by the preacher in all confidence.

The church is the most effective guardian of the moral welfare of the community. While even its most ardent defender would not claim that membership in the church guarantees the moral faultlessness either of the individual or the group, he would be within the limits of easy proof in declaring that the membership of the church includes the most morally clean persons in the community. Men and women are not upright and noble in order to enter the church; they become thus through their association with the ideals and the comrades that they find in the church. The most efficient guardians of the moral safety and welfare of the community are, not the police department, but the churches and schools.

The world is sorely in need of comfort and courage and hope. Sooner or later the experiences of disappointment, suffering, and death must inevitably be faced by every person. Help is needed; for when all the waves and

billows have gone over us, we must find somewhere encouragement and consolation. The movie screen, the merry jest, the thrilling romance, fail us in this hour of our critical need. Where may we look with confident expectation of comfort and courage? To the church, with its Bible, its message, and its Christ. Here is to be read the record of the experience of men who, looking beyond the highest hills for their help, have found it in God. Here are the promises of the presence and comfort and power of the living Christ. The minister and the church are the bulwarks of men in their seasons of sorrow. The church is the comforter of the race.

Perhaps the best definition of the church ever given is "the body of Christ." By means of this simple figure the essential nature and the gracious work of the church are represented more clearly than in any other way. Jesus of Nazareth lived the most blessed life of which the world has any record. He never entered a human situation without making it better. His whole life so incarnated all that is desirable in human experience that he remains the example of that which every one of us, in his highest aspirations for himself and his friends, desires to be. Then came the bleak day when his strong, clean body was done to death and Jesus no longer walked in physical comradeship with men. There remained another possible body for him to occupy, however; it is the church, the group of those who love him, in whom he lives again and through whom he may work once more as he did in Palestine centuries ago. Thus the living Christ incarnates himself again in the living Church. Every member of it acts in Christ's stead. The true church is

abroad in the homes and streets and business of the community, doing for Christ what Christ would be doing if he were present in the flesh once more. This reasonable and sublime ideal of the church becomes convincing and powerful with men when it is presented with enthusiasm by the preacher who has caught its full meaning. Its affirmation will lift a church occasion to new heights of vision and inspiration.

If the particular occasion calls for a historical review of the work of the church, the preacher will attempt to tell the story clearly and briefly, without undue eulogy. The "historical" sermon seems like a contradiction of terms; for history does not "preach." It is perfectly possible, however, to unite the canons of a historical narrative and those of a sermon in a discourse that will run true to both forms.

The following texts and subjects are appropriate to church anniversaries:

THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH

That thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—I Tim. 3:15.

The fact that the church of the living God is the foundation and support of the truth inspires and demands certain standards of conduct in reference to it.

The foundation of truth.—Jesus spoke positively of building his church upon a certain truth attested by experience. And thus the church becomes the depository of certain fundamental truths, which it is charged to teach and defend. The church is the foundation of truth because of the verities which it transmits and exemplifies. When the foundations are deep

and permanent, the whole structure of life is safe and beautiful.

The support of truth.—The pillar is vital to the building; the support of the roof depends upon the pillars; and the roof means shelter and peace. So the church supports the structure of individual and social life. It furnishes the stability that was illustrated by the pillars of Jakin and Boaz, strength and beauty. The solid supports of noble living are found in the church, and the grace and beauty of all human relations are taught and illustrated there.

Right attitudes toward the church.—How ought one to relate himself toward an institution which thus furnishes the foundation and support of the highest life? Three possible relations appear:

Antagonism. This is sometimes due to inherited prejudices and false ideas. When the real nature of the church is understood, it is difficult to imagine fair-minded men opposing it.

Indifference. This attitude is more common than antagonism. It consists in simply giving the church the go-by. But the church is too big and too vital a factor in the community thus to be side-stepped by anyone who has the welfare of the community at heart.

Co-operation. In some specific way every member of the community ought to co-operate with some church. There is a place at some point where this may be expressed. This is to discharge one of the most important of community duties.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

An exposition of the vision of the stream issuing from the altar and flowing forth for the life and healing of the world, found in Ezek. 47:1–12.

The church does not exist for itself alone.—The house is incomplete without the stream that issues from it. Temples

are useful and necessary, but the river of life goes far beyond the church. Forth from the place of prayer and devotion flow the streams meant for the refreshment of a weary world. So soon as the church begins to act as an "end in itself," its power and usefulness are alike ended.

The stream increases as it flows.—The measuring wand revealed increasing depths until at last the stream was bank full and could not be passed. As one thinks of the church, it often appears to be a feeble force. In the beginning it was such a small group, endowed with such trifling energies! Then, century by century it expanded, until at last it has become the most potent moral and spiritual force in the world.

The giver of life.—This is the most general and adequate description of the church. Everything shall live whither the stream shall come. This has been the mission and ministry of the church always: to give life, ampler and better, physical, mental, moral, spiritual, to all the world. The more accurately the influence of the church is evaluated, the more its contribution is seen to be in the terms of the deeper life of the community.

The giver of healing and help.—The continuous process of the church's influence is shown by the statement that the trees bear their fruit every month. The river cleanses the places to which it comes. Health as well as help flow forth from the river of life. This is true of the church. Life is safer, homes are happier, love is sweeter and surer, wherever the influence of the church is felt.

ANTIOCH: THE CHRISTENING CHURCH

An expository study of Acts 13:1–3; 11:26.

The first church, where the Christians received their name, was a type of all churches in the following respects:

Unity.—They were together; this was a unity of numbers: enough of them to give that sense of solidarity and common purpose that is essential. Unity of place: a common meeting-place to realize their fellowship. Unity of purpose: they were apparently inspired by the common loyalty to Christianity. Unity of action: learning, fellowship, service.

Diversity.—Barnabas, the son of consolation, friend and comrade of Paul. Symeon, of whom we know only that he was called the "dark one." Lucius came from Cyprus. Manaen had been a playmate or boyhood friend of Herod the tetrarch. Thus many types were represented in the church. This is ideal. The widest range, rich and poor, young and old, educated and uneducated, fused together by the common loyalty that they realized for their common Lord.

Under divine and human leadership.—Note the primary importance of leadership in all life, especially in the church. Without it the army degenerates into the mob.

Human. These teachers and prophets were men of power. They were giving their best service to the comrades in the little church. So it prospered and grew.

Divine. "The Holy Spirit said." This is supremely important in the modern church. "These things are not settled here." Divine guidance expresses itself in many ways. Every true church is sensitive and responsive to it.

Missionary passion.—Now appears the supreme folly: at a time when it seemed as if the church needed all its resources for its own development, it found the plan of sending away its best members, at the cost of its own resources for home expansion. "The Christian religion is of such a character that the more you export of it the more of it you have for home use." Note that they sent their *best.* It was an *offering* and not a *collection.* Or did Barnabas and Saul become their best only because they were sent forth? Is not the inevitable result

of sacrifice the achievement of true greatness? He that would be great among you shall be your servant.

CREDENTIALS OF THE LIVING CHURCH

And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.—Acts 4: 14.

The church is on trial today; what credentials can it furnish to vindicate its divine mission and authority? There are many ways in which the church seeks to warrant its work to modern society; the one argument against which nothing can be said is the practical results of the church's work in the recovery of human personality.

The affirmation of divine authority.—For centuries the church has put forth the claim that it is the final authority in the field of morals and religion, possessing by divine gift the standards and sanctions from which there is no appeal. There is a measure of truth in the claim, and to a certain type of mind the claim is satisfactory. There are many, however, to whom the claim to authority is not final, and who ask for something more conclusive.

The appeal to reason.—The church has called its theologians to its defense and has attempted to reduce its doctrines to logical terms, maintaining the reasonableness of its great truths. This also has been convincing to a certain type of mind. Christian faith does not consist in consent to absurdities; reason is a handmaid of religion. There are many, however, who seek still other credentials.

The credentials of practical achievement.—In the case of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate we have an example of the power of the Christian religion working through the church to restore to himself, his family, and society one who had been out of normal relations to life. This represents that practical work of "salvation" which always has been the

primary business of the church. These results may be seen all around us. Not only are children and young people kept from going wrong, but those who have already lost their power or have been displaced are recovered. This fact is the supreme defense of the faith today.

A COTTAGE PRAYER-MEETING

And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying.—Acts 12:12.

The book of Acts gives us many glimpses of the early church which reveal in their earliest forms the permanent factors in its continuous history. Three essential factors are revealed here:

Fellowship.—It was at the beginning of Christian history, and neither the organization nor the building of the church had been undertaken. The friends of Jesus were meeting in houses. They needed one another in order to meet the stress of the situation. They were a small company, and the confirmation of their faith called for their utmost resources. Their common experience was a unity. They were sure that they had found the resources for a new life in their relations with Christ. This worked out into a new and blessed fellowship with one another.

Counsel.—One of the points at which their fellowship expressed itself in a most satisfactory way was in their common counsel in questions of difficulty. Peter, their leader, had been imprisoned; he had passed through a wonderful experience of release. A new and glorious confirmation of faith had come to him. He could not think it out or enjoy it. So he hurried to his friends. Picture the meeting: surprise, joy, and all the new assurance that came to them all through the blessing of one.

Prayer.—Peter knew where his friends would be found and what they would be doing. In a matter of common danger like this they would be praying. These friends of Jesus knew where help was to be found; they were keeping tryst with God in the time of their trouble. No merry games for them when their leader's death might come at any time. Their gloom was to be changed to happiness in a moment, but even this they would share with God in prayers of thanksgiving. These are still the characteristics of the true church.

CHAPTER XXV

ORDINATION SERVICES

Ordination to the Christian ministry is quite uniformly practiced by all Christian communions, and in general a public service includes a sermon appropriate to the occasion. Every preacher may expect at some time to be called upon for an ordination sermon.

In preparing this sermon, a preacher may profitably take time enough to review his memory of his own ordination day. What did it mean at the time and what thoughts and emotions did he experience on the occasion? As one recalls these points and tries with sympathetic imagination to define what he would then have been glad to have heard as a message from the preacher, he may be able to determine better what he will now attempt to say. There is no quicker way to become sure of an appropriate subject than for the preacher to put himself in the other person's place.

Again, what has the Christian ministry come to mean to the preacher as the searching and revealing years have passed since his own ordination? There must have come changes in the general conception of a vocation if it has been actually knit up with life. Nothing is static in human experience. What may be counted as illusion, and what are the abiding and blessed factors in the idea of the Christian ministry? Earnest and honest reflection of these questions will open up abundant material for the ordination sermon.

The vocation of the ministry must be defined in reference to the actual situation in the world today. It meant certain ruling principles and forms of service in the time of the Reformation and in the days of Jonathan Edwards. The world is new every year now, and especially have we experienced swift and radical changes since the year 1914. As we seek to define the modern minister's task against the background of these pregnant years, and to anticipate the changes immediately before us, the material for the ordination sermon grows even richer and more timely.

How far may the preacher dare draw upon and state his own experience in an ordination sermon? The danger of doing this too much must be avoided, and yet a principle that can be illustrated by a personal experience becomes all the more profitable. Therefore a considerable use of personal material surely is warranted in an ordination sermon.

The preacher must be careful, however, that he does not trespass too widely on the ground which is to be occupied by others in the program for the occasion. The candidate and the church are generally addressed directly during the service; the preacher must leave these fields free for those who are to occupy them. The sermon must be a sermon and not a charge to the candidate. Care to avoid using material appropriate to the task of other speakers will be necessary, although sometimes an overlooked courtesy.

Another caution is in order. Generally the service is long and several speakers share the program. The brevity of the ordination sermon ought to be carefully observed. Twenty minutes, if possible, is a reasonable time limit.

This may involve the omission of certain details that seem desirable in the discussion; but at the expense of cutting the time due to others, they ought not to be employed.

The following suggestions are made concerning ordination sermons:

HERALDS OF GOOD NEWS

Then they said one to another, We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.—II Kings 7:9.

Something wonderful had been done for Israel. The lepers found it out. What were they to do? The text is their answer.

The gospel makes silence criminal and changes weak men into potent messengers of joy.

This is a day of good tidings.—The conditions in Samaria are essentially repeated in every generation. There is good news and bad news to be had, and the choice is always ours. The press pours both out upon us in a daily flood. We can find it in our own experience. But the good news is there: victory is finally the lot of those who trust God; light breaks.

Silence is criminal.—The first attitude of those who discover the good news is to say little about it. We are inevitably reticent. We do not like to make a noise. But the situation will not sanction silence. Mere negation or neutrality is not permitted. Sometimes it is the height of wrongdoing not to speak. That is the business of the watchman.

Utterance is mandatory.—These two principles go together: Silence is forbidden and utterance is commanded. Thus we pass from the negative to the positive. We have to tell the good news. This brings us to that earliest conception of the minister as the herald or the messenger. He is one upon whom is laid the burden of utterance.

The message makes the messenger.—The whole status of these lepers was changed when they came with good news. It gave dignity and value to their words as well as their persons. The molding power of a great message upon the personality of the one who delivers it is self-evident. The way to make a careless boy thoughtful and self-reliant is to trust him with a personal duty. Weak men become courageous when they are given the privilege of speaking out boldly in God's name. Never was the message greater; it creates great messengers.

THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION

The gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you.—I Cor. 15:1, 2.

This is a practical statement of the gospel as an accepted message which becomes "the power of God unto salvation."

The gospel preached.—Paul was before all else a preacher. He had implicit faith in the fact that if his message was heard, men and women would receive and accept it. Preaching is not merely by the ordained minister. Ten thousand lay sermons are preached to one by the clergy. Wherever the gospel is expressed in any way, there it is preached.

The gospel accepted.—It is not simply an abstract or interesting truth, like some fresh discovery of radio or an interpretation of the poetry of Keats. It demands that we do something with it. It proceeds to do something with us. When we have heard it, we cannot let it alone. It changes our lives. It puts new motives in the place of old ones.

The gospel as standing-ground and ensign.—The gospel becomes an area in which the soul acts. It is also a guiding flag for advance. It is a standard for defense. Each presents a claim. We must fill the area with loving service; we must march forward with the banner; we must set up the ensign and never yield.

The gospel as salvation.—Note the present tense—"are being saved." Salvation is not simply an act; it is a process. There is something to be done for us and in us every day. The program of salvation is therefore not only in the past and the future; it is in the present tense as well.

The gospel as treasure.—It is something that will hold us steady if we hold fast to it. But we have to make an effort to keep a real grip on it. It is no easy matter. It tests our allegiance and our loyalties. All treasure is fleeting. "Riches take wings." So we must match the imperial claim of the gospel with a firm grasp upon it. We must contend and never yield.

OUR MESSAGE

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.—II Cor. 4:5.

The message of Paul in the first century is still valid in our own time.

Negative.—We preach not ourselves. To preach our own minds or moods is a constant and deadly peril. The preacher naturally thinks of his own message, of the way he has shaped it, and of the place that his own personality assumes in giving it content. There is a place in all preaching for the personality of the preacher. He cannot keep wholly out of the message or its utterance. To ask him to do this would be to rob the sermon of one of its essential and potent factors. But there always is danger that the ego will intrude itself.

Positive.—The positive side of the message is gathered under two counts:

Christ Jesus as Lord. From the beginning this has been the content of the Christian gospel. It began with Peter at Pentecost, and it has been the subject of all the great preachers. It means simply that Jesus the living Christ is the true Master of all those who bear his name. His motives control us; his truth is our law; his character is our standard. When

we possess his spirit and his spirit possesses us, we know that he is our Lord. He is first in all our preaching. Christ is the central item and the supreme energy. This is our gospel.

Ourselves, servants for Christ. This is not the same as subserviency or cringing humility. Service to others because Christ commands it honors and dignifies every power of personality. There is no effort too lowly or kind when the service is given out of constraining love for Christ. It lifts, inspires, and consecrates us. The word "service" has been sadly overworked, but it still has power in it as never before. In spite of all the modern emphasis upon force and the conquests wrought by physical energy, the power of loving service is greater than it ever was before. We are seeking avenues of power and ways of conquest. There is just one that finally and completely attains its object—service to men in Christ's name.

THE MAKING OF A MINISTER

Gal. 1:15–17. In this bit of autobiography Paul expresses his conception of the ministry, which we here study item by item.

Dedicated.—The minister cannot possibly undertake and carry on his work in the same way that another person does. For example, there are great areas in which the engineer and the minister work in the same ways, but the minister must be what Woodsworth calls "a dedicated spirit."

Called through grace.—Barring any satisfactory definition of what a "call" to the ministry is, there surely is an especial sense of urgency and obligation felt by the minister. In the deepest recesses of his being he knows that there is a duty resting upon him which makes his vocation definite, positive, and joyous.

Christ revealed within.—This is often regarded as the peculiar experience of St. Paul, but it is not so. The great

phrase descriptive of the Christian experience is "in Christ." This is as possible today as it was when Saul of Tarsus had his great illumination on the road to Damascus. It means union in purpose and work.

Made a preacher.—The preacher is the herald of good news. When he has something to declare, he undertakes his work in a sense of privilege and joy. He is to give to those who need to hear his message their first happy confidence of its content and value. The urge of this need drives him forward; the consciousness of it allures him. He is like the runner announcing victory to the eager watcher from the walls of a besieged city.

Preparation.—This great work requires the most careful preparation. Paul took time to think through the message that he was to deliver until he understood it. Then only, he began to take counsel. Thought preceded instruction. He could estimate the relative value of the testimony of the first friends of Jesus because he had digested in his own thinking his experience of the living Christ.

Definite work.—Paul did not go here and there at random, according to the whim or influence of the moment. He chose the gentile world with a keen sense of the difficulties ahead and the needs of those in whose behalf he preached and labored. His ministry was marked by precision of aim. He was the first specialist in world-wide Christianity.

CHAPTER XXVI

FUNERALS

Christlieb says: "The Funeral Address belongs to the most difficult, but also to the most beautiful and effective functions of the pastor. Its task is not to drive away the God-sent sorrow, but to purify and hallow it." The truth of this statement finds abundant confirmation in the experience of every preacher. There is hardly any occasion at which the young minister finds himself more sorely at a loss than when he is called upon to conduct a funeral service in which a sermon or address is expected. When he turns to the books on preaching, he will find almost a total lack of helpful suggestions.

Customs are rapidly changing in respect to the funeral sermon. Formerly it was a perplexing effort so to combine personal eulogy with religious truth that mourning relatives would be comforted and not too much laughter and scorn stirred up among critical listeners who knew too much about the deceased.

Recently the funeral sermon has been largely abandoned at the burial of the dead, to the great relief of the preacher and certainly in the interests of good taste and truthfulness. There are some occasions, however, when a brief sermon is necessary, and the modern preacher must be prepared for it. In order that he may speak wisely on such an occasion, the following principles are briefly stated.

The funeral service is for the living and not for the

dead. It may be that the expectations of the family and friends will be such as cannot be gratified wholly; for the tendency of grief always is selfish, and this fact must be reckoned with. The funeral service, however, is to be planned and carried out for the comfort and encouragement of the surviving and sorrowing group.

The psychological conditions at the time of a funeral present a unique opportunity to touch the deeper notes in truth and to find response in ways that could not be expected under ordinary conditions. There is a sobering sense of spiritual reality; a readiness at least to feel earnestly, if not to think deeply; a remission of the customary moods of frivolity and carelessness—all of which create a peculiar atmosphere which the alert preacher can capture and capitalize. Needless to say, he will not abuse this possibility by making his brief sermon a lecture or an emotional outburst.

The manifest purpose of the sermon to bring comfort to the grieving group defines another characteristic which must be emphasized. The minister at such a time seeks to give Christian comfort through the affirmation of immortality, the continuous life of the human spirit, and the deathless meaning of love. Through all the centuries since Jesus lived, the Christian faith has brought its unfailing consolation and peace to men; and there is no limit to its power in every time of grief. Death is not a disaster; it is the beginning and not the end.

Yet the Christian preacher will never mask to his own eyes or try to obscure to others the reality of death as an experience that brings unspeakable anguish to the broken home. It is no kindness to deny the pangs of separation

and the long weariness of the years of waiting. True comfort derives from facing this bravely and then bringing up the reserves of the Christian gospel as resource to the soul in its struggle with sorrow.

Nor can this consolation rest in a mere easy assurance that "all is well." There must be reasons for the preacher's words in the time of sorrow and death. In preparation for a funeral service where any kind of oral address is to be expected, a minister must go down to the very deeps of his own conviction and assure himself that there are solid reasons for the words he is to speak. All the resources of his theology must be brought into action. What does one really believe about the meaning of human life, the significance of death, and personal survival beyond the grave? The comfort of the preacher's message will depend on this.

The eternal life of God and the assurance of the teachings of Jesus are two of these major truths that undergird the message of Christian comfort and hope. In death we face the majesty, the eternity, the wisdom, the love of God. "Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." This is followed by the assurance of immortality as it comes to us from the promises and life of Jesus. "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I am the resurrection and the life . . . . he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." In spite of every tendency to disparage the value of the words and example of Jesus, these will remain as the greatest assurance which can come to Christian homes in the time of sorrow.

The sympathy of the minister will inevitably find expression in his sermon. The worst of all failures at a funeral is to be formal, professional, and cold. Unless the

conduct of the funeral, even of a stranger, has cost the preacher personal suffering, he has not fully entered into the meaning of his ministry at such a time. In no shallow sense, he must "suffer with" the group in their loss and grief. This will not destroy his sense of moral values or make him merely tender and tearful, but the poignant sorrow in which men lay their dead away must be renewed in the minister's personal experience at every funeral. It is probably the most costly and exhausting act that he performs in the course of his entire ministry.

One principle, at least, seems to have become quite well defined: personal references are to be reduced to a minimum and the great Christian truths appropriate to the occasion are to be brought out. Of one sin the preacher never will be guilty: he will not harrow up the feelings of his auditors by the recital of personal details and experience. He is the comforter and not the assassin of the affections.

In the light of these principles the following suggestions are made:

AFFLICTION AND ITS RESULT

For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.—II Cor. 4:17, 18.

This is St. Paul's philosophy in dealing with afflictions.

Their weight.—When St. Paul describes our afflictions as "light," he does not mean that they are trivial. They become light only as they are considered in relation to their possible consequences. Inasmuch as a "weight" of gain and glory may be derived from them, they become light. Any sorrow con-

sidered in itself is heavy. It is lightened only as its results are reckoned with.

Their perspective.—The temporary and human affliction must be considered in reference to the eternal and spiritual issues which are to grow out of it. Seen alone and in its stark reality, every human sorrow looks vast and unendurable. Just as a small object held too close to the eye can shut out the entire landscape, so a sorrow out of perspective may shut out the light and beauty of life. St. Paul therefore insists upon putting the affliction into its true relation to the eternal content of the universe.

Their permanence.—Out of the true perspective of afflictions comes the estimate of their transient meaning, which brings courage and comfort as we endure them. The unseen factors in any experience of sorrow are love, faith, courage, and similar qualities which are revealed in meeting the affliction. Against these are set physical losses, pain, and the breaking up of concrete human programs of action. The unseen realities, we know, are eternal. Love and courage outlast any mortal experience that seems for the time to shatter the visible and the tangible. Therefore the affliction itself may pass into the greater and abiding world of spiritual experience, which is eternal and satisfying.

OUR HOUSE ETERNAL

For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens.—II Cor. 5:1.

In spite of the inevitable experience of death, we know that the spirit survives beyond death and is provided with a dwelling place eternal.

The mortal body must perish.—There is no escape from this experience. The human body is wearing out, and sooner or later the time must come when the spirit cannot use it.

This is nothing to fear, in spite of an inevitable dread of pain. If it involved the extinction of conscious personal life, it might be fearful. If an experience still more imperfect and painful were to be awaited, death might be dreadful. In the Christian view of life, death appears as neither of these alternatives. It is the beginning of fuller and more perfect life.

The divine habitation is waiting.—St. Paul says that this heavenly building is from God. It is not of human devising but is a divine gift. Concerning the details of this habitation of the spirit that survives death we do not know. What we do know is that it is the gift of divine love and wisdom, and therefore it is what the spirit needs most and can use best for the expression of itself under the conditions of that new life. Therefore we may surely trust that it will be the best possible instrument for the purpose.

The new body or instrument is eternal.—The mortal body wears out; this will not. The human house gets out of repair, leaks, tumbles, decays; this will not. This physical instrument breaks and blunts; the eternal, God-given one will not. Therefore we confidently look beyond death to a new and better organ through which the free spirit can express itself. This fact brings us eager expectation of what is yet to be, makes death an adventure, adds reality and beauty to the life eternal.

COMFORT: HUMAN AND DIVINE

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.—II Cor. 1:3, 4.

The world sorely needs comfort; the final source of this is in God, but it is ministered also through those who have themselves shared it.

A sorrowing world.—Of the sorrow of the world there can be no doubt. Our ideals are seldom realized. Disappointment is constantly met. Death takes away our kinsfolk and friends. We set up high standards of truth and love and then fail to attain them. Friends whom we trusted sometimes betray us. We do not win our own self-respect. Life is short; pain is hard to bear; grief comes in many ways. This is not the whole picture of life, but it is a part of the whole true report.

God is the source of comfort.—Comfort is sought by all men and in many ways. We try to ignore the experience. We attempt to forget. We divert ourselves by other interests, taking refuge in work and travel. Sometimes we grow gloomy and cynical. All these fail. The only complete source of comfort is in God. In the Father's heart is pity and help and healing for all the children of his love.

Comforted souls are the ministers of comfort to others.—Comfort comes from God in many ways: the promises in the Bible; the assurance that is understood in deeper moods of the spirit; but chiefly from others, who have passed through disappointment, have found aid in God, and who are therefore able to help those who are in affliction. This source of aid is most gratifying because of its concrete reality. We know that the evidence is not theoretical, but practical. These have been the actual experiences of friends in real situations; the divine comfort has "worked"; therefore we know it will be valid for us.

COMFORT AND COURAGE

He will come down like rain upon the mown grass,
As showers that water the earth.

—Ps. 72:6.

The figure is vivid and beautiful. The mowers have been over the field, cutting the grass and leaving the surface exposed and bleak. There is always the potency of new life remaining, however, which will spring up into beauty as a

result of the action of the rain and the sunlight. So God vivifies the soul that has been traversed by the cutting edges of sorrow.

The mown field.—Pain, disappointment, and death pass over us, like the machines that cut down the growth of summer on fair meadows. "Death the Reaper" is an accurate and familiar figure in poetry and art. The bleak and barren field is a pitiable sight.

The waiting roots and buds.—The wealth and wisdom of nature are seen in the gracious provision of the buds which are waiting to renew the life that has been taken from the mown fields. The grass may be cut, but new crops will spring up and again serve the needs of man. The bleak meadow will become fertile again.

The gracious rain.—In due time it comes. Often we cannot understand why it is delayed so long. The day of the life-giving rain and the quickening sun is not for us to determine. We are to wait in patience but also in confident expectation for the comfort and courage which gradually and surely come to the needy soul in the experience of sorrow. The rain is gentle and quiet; so the consolations of God come in quiet and unexpected ways. The rain brings the conditions under which new life springs up; so the eternal and divine comfort creates the right conditions for renewed action and courage.

The new life.—Perhaps the first harvest of grass seems the richest and best; but there are certain precious values in the second crop. In the life of the spirit there is no doubt of the richer, lovelier life that follows the experience of an "accepted sorrow." Those who have passed through it, sustained by the help of God, live a deeper, more radiant, richer life than would have been possible without the affliction. Those who have thus suffered are the consolers of men.

CHAPTER XXVII

COMMUNION

One of the articles of the Apostles' Creed which is often thoughtlessly repeated is, "I believe in the communion of saints." This is not a doctrinal or theoretical statement; it represents one of the most fundamental facts of Christian experience. Jesus' way of living cannot be realized in isolation from one's comrades; it is a social achievement. Jesus sent his disciples out together, not alone. He promised to be among his friends forever where two or three were met together in his name. The great sacrament of the Lord's Supper—the oldest, most permanent, and most convincing single fact of Christian history—was instituted and is observed as a testimonial to the mutual dependence of Christians upon one another and the heartening strength and grace of their fellowship.

The sacrament itself seldom, if ever, calls for a sermon. Indeed, a formal discourse hardly fits its celebration. There are occasions, however, when a sermon is in order; and the preacher must be prepared to speak appropriately at such times.

The first way in which to meet the situation is, manifestly, to present the fundamental necessity and the permanent warrants for Christian fellowship. For the Holy Communion roots in the very essence of the Christian experiences. Not only did Jesus place it there, but

the unbroken witness of the Christian people confirms his judgment. Without one another, the achievement of the Christian experience is impossible.

Then we must evaluate anew the function of a communion service as a means of spiritual culture and power. There are many different conceptions of the Christian sacraments, and it is worth while to understand them. Serious study of this field of Christian teaching cannot fail to intensify a preacher's sense of the real place and value of the communion service, however it is regarded, in the culture of individual experience and the strengthening of the fellowship of the church. The neglect of the communion is the loss of a priceless privilege by Christian brethren.

Undoubtedly the communion sermon will not rise beyond the height of the preacher's own experience. Unless communion with God in Christ has become a real factor in his own life, he will hardly be able to awaken conviction as to its worth in the minds and experience of others. Therefore the preparation of a communion sermon involves a definite searching of heart and definition of conviction which will call for the preacher's utmost sincerity.

An example of preaching on Communion Sunday is found in *Communion Addresses*, edited by Frederick J. North (New York: George H. Doran Co.). The preachers are Scots, and the sermons bear the marks of reverent treatment and thorough preparation.

In addition to the suggestions contained in the foregoing volume, the following texts and subjects may be found profitable:

MADE PERFECT IN ONE

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected unto one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me.—John 17:23.

Jesus defined the final basis for Christian communion. As he and the Father were one in perfect fellowship of purpose, so those who loved him were to be united in complete communion. This perfect fellowship has been realized in a human experience which we all can understand and reproduce.

The essential basis of communion between Christians is their common possession by the in-dwelling spirit of Christ. This is more important than any other factor, blending without discord differences of race, language, custom, or social station. The one level at which we all meet is our response to the mastery of Jesus.

This is the only basis of Christian unity on which we may rely with confidence. Only thus are persons of widely differing external circumstances "perfected into one." Unity is not achieved by forcing it through the stress of external pressure; it issues from a common inner control and experience.

Two results are unfailingly derived from Christian communion: the divine mission of Jesus is validated, and God's love for men is attested. If those who profess to love and follow Christ cannot have happy and profitable fellowship on earth, grave doubt is inevitably cast on the character and work of the Redeemer. Since human fellowship must rest finally upon love, its expression in sincere and beautiful forms is the vindication of God's love for all mankind.

BUILDING UP EACH OTHER

So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.—Rom. 14:19.

The objective in Christian fellowship is unity and growth.

Peace.—The first great object of our quest is that which will produce and promote peace. Peace is more than absence

of conflict or freedom from battle. Peace is the happy and united pursuit of common and noble ends. So it involves action and intense labor. What will make for peace between Christian comrades?

Centering on Christ.—There is no other single influence that will iron out the discords and settle the muddy waters so surely as gaining a new conception of the central place of Jesus in the life of the church.

Big objectives in service.—Contention may disappear under the influence of a big, worthy objective. When we pursue small or low ends, we tend to fret and work at cross purposes. A deep channel produces the peaceful flow of current.

Edification.—A better word is "growth." This is the sure sign of life. The organism grows. We can measure the depth of our reality of Christian experience by asking whether we are developing or not. What are the ends that will promote growth?

Cultivating knowledge through thought and devotion.—It is impossible to grow in the Christian life unless we use mind, imagination, and devotional power to make clear and vital the grounds and objects of our faith. We must think more, study more, and pray more if we are to grow in the Christian life.

Expressing ourselves in service.—The great objectives of service must be defined, and then we must let ourselves loose upon them. We cannot grow without expression of that which has been impressed upon us. Make the ideals vivid and commanding by working to realize them.

COMRADES IN THE GREAT CAUSE

For they labored with me in the gospel.—Phil. 4:3.

Fellowship is necessary in every department of human life; it is supremely necessary in the Christian life. The significance of the text turns on the preposition "in."

Not merely labor FOR the gospel.—This is necessary. The gospel is a cause that demands a champion. It must be presented, defended, taught, and applied. Study each of these activities. They must be pursued jointly.

But champions may become mere shouters or partisan supporters of a person or a program. Current Christian work sometimes becomes promotion. We speak of "selling religion." That is merely work for it.

But labor IN the gospel.—A great cause always brings something more than a program to be promoted or an end to be gained.

The gospel becomes a great sphere of enthusiasm into which we are thrown. We labor and love and live in a world of happy service when we become Christians. The message creates new accents of certainty and becomes a "joy and crown."

The gospel brings the poise and power which its champions need. Mighty energies always flow from great objectives. When a big ideal lays hold of common or small men, it makes them big also. The latent nobility of human nature always is revealed in a crisis.

The deeper our dedication, the greater joy and power we receive. The way to become confident about the gospel is to get deeply into it. Then we find what it involves. We taste its privileges. We experience its renewals. The way to grow is to pitch in.

FELLOWSHIP IN COMMON LIFE

So when they got out upon the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.—John 21:9.

This little detail in the story of the relation of the disciples to their risen Lord is often overlooked, but it contains the following suggestions concerning Christian Fellowship:

The fellowship of appreciation.—Jesus perceived that at the close of their long night of hard work his friends would be hungry. This has often seemed repugnant to those who exalt the deity of Jesus; but, rightly understood, this incident is an exquisite revelation of the divine character of Christ. It reveals his marvelous humanity in the midst of his glorious divinity. One of the most beautiful areas of Christian communion is our understanding and appreciation of the needs of others. We all want to be appreciated; we must seek, in turn, to appreciate others.

The fellowship of provision.—Jesus not only understood the needs of his friends, but also he made provision for them in the most practical human way. He brought the bread, prepared the fish, built the fire and got the breakfast ready. This suggests an essential factor in the fellowship of Christians. Provision must be made for all kinds of human needs. These may be physical, mental, or spiritual. Provision may be made by means of large gifts of money or by words and acts of gracious kindness. The important matter is, not the cost of the gift to be given, but the spirit that informs it. Christian charity in its broadest reach covers all expressions of communion of spirit.

The fellowship of the shared life.—After the physical needs of his friends had been cared for, Jesus shared with them the inmost meaning of their common life. This was the perfect communion for which he had prepared them. This points out the sphere of Christian fellowship for today. Only as Christians share their profoundest sense of truth, their highest motives of service, their deepest experience of the life with God in Christ, do they make good with the possibilities of Christian communion.

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